

 XUNTA  
DE GALICIA.

 Xacobeo 21-22

Pontevedra



a walk of  
history and life

# Pontevedra

THE CITY OF PONTEVEDRA WAS FOUNDED IN ROMAN TIMES AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER LÉREZ, WHERE THE RÍA DE PONTEVEDRA ESTUARY IS FORMED. IT IS LOCATED IN THE HEART OF THE RÍAS BAIXAS AND IN MEDIEVAL TIMES WAS CALLED "PONTUS VETERIS" (OLD BRIDGE). THE START OF THE RENAISSANCE WITNESSED THE CITY'S GOLDEN AGE DUE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF FISHING AND MARITIME TRADE. THE CAPITAL OF THE PROVINCE SINCE 1834, IT IS NOWADAYS A SMALL, ACCESSIBLE, AND EASY TO GET AROUND CITY THAT HAS A WEALTH OF HERITAGE.



# Essentials

Alameda and ruins of the Convento de San Domingos

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Praza da Ferrería and Iglesia de San Francisco

B



Santuario de la Virgen Peregrina

C



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D



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E



Real Basílica de Santa María a Maior

F







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We start our tour in the **Praza de España 1** (Spain Square), in front of the Casa Consistorial (town hall) and the Alameda park at the entrance of the old walled area, which is an easily accessible spot with a public car park and a bus stop nearby.

Pontevedra's most representative public buildings stand around the Alameda: the PALACIO DE LA DIPUTACIÓN (headquarters of the provincial council); the old CUARTEL DE SAN FERNANDO (Saint Ferdinand barracks), which is now the faculty of Fine Arts; the INSTITUTO VALLE-INCLÁN (Valle-Inclán school); the SUBDELEGACIÓN DEL GOBIERNO (sub-delegation of the government); and the Casa Consistorial.

From a historical point of view, we can highlight the MONUMENTO A LOS HÉROES DE PONTESAMPAIO (monument to the heroes of Pontesampaio), which commemorates the 1809 victory over Napoleonic troops in the small Pontevedra town, and the ruins of the CONVENTO DE SAN DOMINGOS (convent of Saint Dominic), which retains the Gothic apse of the church, dating back to the 14th century, and the 15th century entrance to the chapter house.

We move into the historic area on **rúa da Bastida 2** to reach **rúa da Alhóndiga 3**, where we can find FIEL CONTRASTE, a sculpture by Ramón Conde, which tells us that back in the 16th century an alhóndiga grain exchange was located on this site. Here, a person hired by the Town Council would weigh and measure the goods that came in



**FACING** Héroes de Pontesampaio  
**RIGHT** Casa Consistorial





through the nearby gate of San Domingos, which has since disappeared.

Continuing on our tour along **rúa Don Filiberto 4**, we can spot one of the oldest civic buildings in the city, the CASA DAS CAMPAS (House of Bells), the seat of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Vigo in Pontevedra. Legend has it that this was the place where the Pontevedra pirate Benito Soto hid his treasure. He was executed in Gibraltar in 1830 and coined the phrase “dead



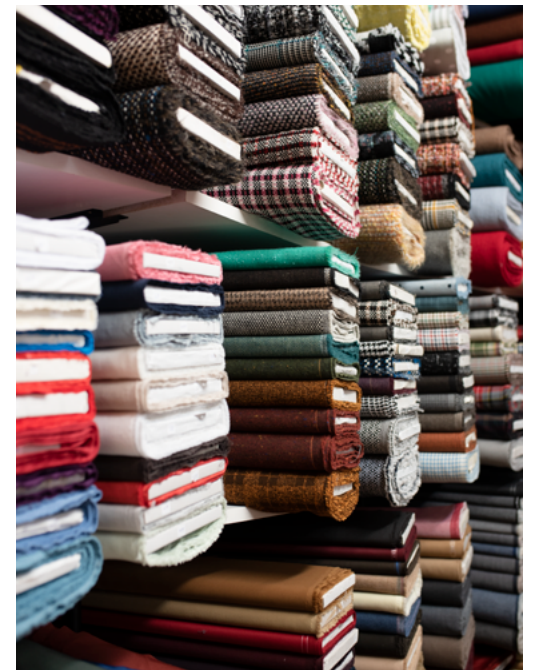
men tell no tales”. The façade is adorned with ogee arches and the coat of arms of the Puga family, who were linked to Ribadavia, the capital of Ribeiro wine, which was exported from the port of Pontevedra.

Opposite, the TEATRO PRINCIPAL (main theatre) and the registered offices of the LICEO society are housed in the same building. The Liceo was founded in 1855, which makes it, after the Town Council, the oldest civil society in the city. It organises the well-known Baile de la Peregrina (Dance of the Pilgrim) which is attended by more than three thousand people.

The main façade faces onto **rúa Manuel Quiroga 5**, which used to be known as rúa Platería or Comercios, where we can visit clothing and shoe shops. Some of them specialise in wedding suits and the biggest labels. In others, such as Carnaby, a vintage shop where, in addition to clothes and shoes

from Spanish and international designers, we can find posters from films and TV shows, funk, reggae, soul, and classical vinyl records, and an endless selection of items, such as record players, radios, and their Remember shirts, which are all inspired by the not-too-distant past.

The street also offers a range of other shops. A classic decoration shop is Eléctrica Moderna, which in 2015 was judged by Vogue to be one of top twelve shops in the sector in Spain. There are also some more traditional shops for those who like to sew and are looking for the finest fabrics for ball gowns or simply for the home, such as Tejidos Risco, La Moda Idea, which opened in 1896, and Almacenes Clarita, which has been owned by the same family since 1904. There are other more innovative shops such as Cincelaser where in just 20 minutes you can get any gift personalised by a laser and where they also have a surprising collection of decorated tambourines and wooden piggybanks.



Elsewhere on rúa Manuel Quiroga, elegant boutiques such as Chamonix and Tólf, with a carefully curated shop window, give us insights into the latest trends in women’s fashion. Young people can find something for them at Bullitt Store, which sells skater fashion, and helps the most disadvantaged with a number of community campaigns.

On Saturdays at midday, we can enjoy the vermouth and roll event at La Quesera, a lively spot that mixes music, vermouth, and a carefully selected range of Spanish and international cheese, with a different cheeseboard on offer every week. The O Bioco cafe-bar is next door with its original mushroom or seaweed teas.

**FACING, ABOVE** Convento de San Domingos  
**FACING, BELOW** Fiel Contraste  
**ABOVE** Tejidos Risco  
**BELOW** Teatro Principal



On the adjacent **rúa Soportais 6**, [A Moda Dabaixo](#) was opened in 1896 and has continued to sell textiles under the stewardship of the same family ever since. From those early days it has kept part of the wooden counter; its window displays clothes alongside collector's items and old toys. This seems to be a tradition from days gone by when shop owners would place miniature trains in their shop windows as a means of drawing Pontevedra residents to look at their displays. Just next door, tradition is balanced out by [Lagasca](#), a concept-store for women's fashion and accessories and unique items for home decoration.

We now come to the **Praza da Ferrería 7** (Blacksmith's square), the name of which points to the main activity that took place there: ironworking. The arcades were home to the forges of blacksmiths producing weapons, shields, and daggers to arm knights and armies from the age of the Catholic Kings all the way to the 19th century. Its lively terraces are now unquestionably the beating heart of Pontevedra's social and cultural life. The square is a unique place due to its buildings of different eras, styles, and heights, such as the modernist [Edificio Herrería](#) (Blacksmith Building), from 1902.

**FACING** Iglesia de la Peregrina  
**ABOVE** Restobar Savoy



On the corner with the Porta Trabancas (Trabancas Gate) is the [Savoy Restobar](#). This restaurant is on the old site of the Café Savoy, which opened in 1936 and was an iconic site, as it was frequented by renowned painters, writers, and intellectuals, such as Laxeiro, Pesqueira, Celso Emilio Ferreiro, Filgueira Valverde, and Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, who made up the "O Faladoiro" (Meet-up) group. The top floor offers a splendid view of the Praza de Ferrería.

In the surrounding area we can find the [IGLESIA DE LA PEREGRINA 8](#) (church of the Pilgrim), with its odd floor plan in the shape of a scallop shell, the symbol of the pilgrimage, which you can see if you climb up to the cupola. The façade of the church is decorated with a depiction of the Virgin Mary and the Baby Jesus, San José (Saint Joseph) and San Santiago (Saint James) dressed in the style of Medieval pilgrims, as is to be expected in a place which the Portuguese



Way passes through on its route to Santiago de Compostela. At the [Joyería Suárez](#) jeweller, just opposite, we can buy silver replicas of this monument and the Virgen de la Peregrina (Pilgrim Virgin), as well as the Pontevedra bracelet depicting the city's most recognisable monuments. This jeweller, which has been in the city for more than one hundred and fifty years, is the creator of the "Joyas con historia" (Jewels with history) collection, inspired by the art and history of Pontevedra.

In front of it stands the [MONUMENTO AL LORO RAVACHOL](#) (monument to Ravachol the parrot), the life and soul of the carnival in Pontevedra, who lived here in Perfecto Feijoo's pharmacy. The pharmacy was a place full of lively

**ABOVE** Praza da Ferrería

**BELOW** Fonte da Ferrería and Iglesia de San Francisco

**FACING** Bar O Parvadas

discussions including Ortega y Gasset, Miguel de Unamuno, Pablo Iglesias, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Isaac Albéniz. Fate saw fit to see the parrot pass away during Carnival and his funeral was so well-attended that it changed the history of this celebration in Pontevedra. Every year on the Saturday following Carnival, the parrot, who was so popular for his rude turns of phrase, is laid to rest.

To the side of the Iglesia de la Peregrina (church of the Pilgrim), at no. 4 rúa González de Zúñiga, we can visit the [Bar O Parvadas](#). This bar has been open for almost a century and seems to get its name from the word for the silly things one might say after knocking back some wine, which is still served here in the traditional style in a white ceramic mug. Numerous boinas (berets) hang from the walls, which tells us that this is the refuge of the Peña da Boina (Boina club), the oldest in Spain, founded in 1958 by people who loved to eat and drink, and of course, put the world to rights.



Nearby, at no. 3 rúa Benito Corbal, [Guarnicionería y Tienda Hípica E. Mourriño](#) was opened in 1898 selling leather crafts for the world of horse riding. It has since grown into a shop selling fashion accessories, whilst also giving good advice to those who have a taste for horse riding.

Next door, at no. 9, we can find the [Panadería Acuña](#) bakery, which was opened in 1950. This is just one of the company's many stores. This family-owned business, now run by the fourth generation of bakers, has 17 shops over a good part of the province. They mostly make all their bread by hand, so it's not unusual to see large queues outside, especially around lunchtime.

Our tour takes us back to the Praza de Ferrería through the Xardíns Castro Sampedro (Castro Sampedro Gardens). The Renaissance-era [FONTE DA FERRERÍA](#) (blacksmith's fountain) stands amongst the camellias, whilst behind it on higher ground is the [IGLESIA](#)

[DE SAN FRANCISCO](#) (church of Saint Francis), whose patron saint, San Francisco (Saint Francis of Assisi), is credited with founding the church when he made a pilgrimage to Santiago back in the 13th century. The Gothic interior houses the tomb of Paio Gómez Chariño, noble, poet, troubadour, sailor, and politician, who assisted in the conquest of Seville in 1248. We can identify his tomb by the inscription reading "he who won Seville from the Moors".

In the Praza da Estrela (Star Square) is the [Café-Bar Carabela](#), which introduced the city's first public television in 1946 and where some years later, in 1969, some scenes from *Esa Mujer* (That woman), the film starring Sara Montiel, were filmed, which made the place even more famous. The lively terrace in the square. There is a mural from the painter Conde Corbal inside above the bar which depicts monuments and daily life in the city.





Next door we can find the [PAZO DOS BARBEITO](#) (Barbeito Manor House), known as the Casa das Caras (House of Faces) due to the medallions that adorn the façade. The coats of arms of the Barbeito and Padrón families complete the rest of the decoration.

Leaving the square by the shopping [rúa Conde San Román](#) <sup>9</sup> we come across some unique businesses such as the [El Pueblo](#) Bookshop and Printing House, which was founded in 1911 as a printing house and publisher of newspapers such as *El Pueblo* and *El País*. There is also the [Cerería San Román](#) chandlery, the first in Galicia, which still operates from its workshop in Ponteareas, under the management of the fourth generation of the same family. It specialises in the traditional candle-making technique from more than a century ago, using beeswax and one hundred-year-old tools to polish them. The votive candles in the shape of arms, heads, and legs, which are highly sou-

ght-after by the loyal customers for *romería* processions, are particularly striking. It is a particularly good line of business as Galicia is the autonomous community that burns the most candles in the whole of Spain!

[Las Tareixas](#) es una pequeña tienda-taller donde comercializan complementos realizados en Galicia y todos hechos a mano, destacando sus originales y coloridos bolsos multifunción.

[Las Tareixas](#) is a small workshop and shop selling handmade accessories made in Galicia, including an eye-catching range of original and colourful multipurpose bags.

Another iconic shop is the old Enrique Eiras Puig pharmacy, which opened in 1872 and is today the [Farmacia Domínguez](#) pharmacy. Going inside is like travelling back in time with the doors, the floor tiles, the counter, the glass and porcelain jars, and the striking wooden railings separating the clients and the pharmacists. It is a temple of health, as clearly shown by the fresco on the ceiling which bears the legend “Ars cum natura ad salutem conspirans” (Art and nature combining for health). It is no surprise that it was used to shoot the *Los Gozos y las Sombras* Spanish television programme.



**FACING** Cafe Bar Caravela

**BELOW** Ceiling fresco of the Farmacia Domínguez



From here we make our way onto the **Praza da Verdura** <sup>10</sup> (Square of the Vegetable). The only sign of the old fruit and vegetable market left is the name. It is now a very lively square with several terraces set out by bars and pubs.

Overlooking the area is the CASA DA LUZ (House of Light) where the first steam engines and dynamos were installed in 1887 which made Pontevedra the first city in Galicia to have electric street lighting. In the Tourist Information Centre located here we can get information and maps of the city's five shopping districts.

We head along *rúa Martín Sarmiento* to the **Praza da Leña** <sup>11</sup> (Firewood Square) and pass by some shops with history and tradition such as Curtidos Queiro, at no. 39, where, with 80 years' experience in leather, they not only sell items made in leather, but can also advise us on how to treat it as they sell every type of tool and item required to do so, as well as even horsehide, cowhide, pigskin, goatskin...

The PRAZA DA LEÑA is definitely one of the most picture-perfect places in Pontevedra. It is an idyllic setting. The calvary is the focus

**FACING** Praza da Verdura  
**ABOVE** Praza da Leña



of the square, which is lined by traditional buildings with arcades and glass-enclosed balconies, 18th century town houses and lively bars, terraces, and restaurants. Eirado da Leña is of special interest. Here, Iñaki Bretal, member of the Grupo Nove group and recent winner of a Michelin Star in 2021, leads the kitchen and manages to delightfully pair the culinary tradition of the Rías Baixas with the innovative touch that makes him so different.

We walk back along ***rúa Martín Sarmiento*** <sup>12</sup> to visit the IGLESIA DE SAN BARTOLOMÉ (church of Saint Bartholomew) which belonged to the Jesuits until they were expelled in 1767. The church has a façade decorated with the image of the Virgin Mary between the Baroque columns, coats of arms, and pediments. It houses a good selection of reredos and sculptures, including a striking Virgen de la O (Virgin of the O or Pregnant Virgin), the patron saint of the city of Ponte-



vedra, which represents the Virgin Mary in a late stage of pregnancy. It is not surprising that is the reason it is an object of such devotion, especially for pregnant women. The old adjoining college, where Martín Sarmiento studied, is now part of the [MUSEO DE PONTEVEDRA](#) (Pontevedra Museum).

Leaving the church, we stumble across the traditional [Numismática Sarmiento](#) coin shop, which in addition to coins and notes, also sells antiques and collector's items. . We head down past the buttresses supporting the church, which were erected to brace the building after the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. On the ground floor of the building (no. 3 rúa Padre Amodeo), [La Ultramar](#) tavern opened in 2015. This space run by Pepe Vieira has received a Michelin Star and is also a member of the Grupo Nove group.

**FACING** Pazo de Mugartegui

**ABOVE** Municipal market

**BELOW** Cuchillería Gómez



Next door, we can visit the sixth building in the [MUSEO DE PONTEVEDRA](#), which comprises 16,000 pieces in six different spaces around the city. The huge collection ranges from prehistory all the way to the present day, which makes it one of the most interesting museums in Galicia.

In the neighbouring **Praza da Pedreira** <sup>13</sup> (Quarry Square), we can see the [PAZO DE MURGATEGUI](#) (Mugartegui Manor House), one of the finest example of the civil Baroque style in the cities of Galicia. Today it is the headquarters of the Regulatory Council of the Rías Baixas Designation of Origin. This body oversees and certifies the quality of the wine produced in this prestigious designation.

The peace and quiet of this area contrasts with the hustle and bustle of the nearby [MERCADO MUNICIPAL](#) <sup>14</sup> (municipal market), which is spread over a two-floor building and is a



must-see for anyone who loves fresh produce. If we see anything we like, Gastro-bar Olmos or Bar La Plaza, on the second floor, will cook it up for us at a reasonable price. In the same culinary field, [O Mercado](#) gives us the chance to sample a wide variety of produce and dishes and sometimes also puts on concerts and art exhibitions to round off our experience.

The area around the market is a real hive of commercial activity, mainly in the mornings. As well as food products, we can find shops of every kind, such as newsagents, haberdasheries, which stock items that can be over 70 years old, the [Cuchillería Gómez](#) knife shop, which entices us in with a 1952 sharpening wheel, and the [Joyería Pilar Álvarez](#) jeweller, which has been in the same family for three

**ABOVE** Cestigar

**BELOW** Fábrica Vintage

**FACING** Praza de Méndez Núñez

generations since it was opened in 1953. Some general stores make up the rest of the shopping options, where you can still get some fantastic collector's items. An antiques and second-hand market is held on Sunday mornings all along rúa Serra.

A stone's throw away on **Praza Celso García de la Riega** <sup>15</sup> (Celso García de la Riega Square), we can see the [PAZO DE LOS MURGA E IBAIZABAL](#) (Murga E Ibaizabal Manor House), which still bears the family coat of arms, a basket-handle arch, and an alfiz panel. The ground floor is fully taken up by the [La Estafeta](#) tapas restaurant. The building was the site of the first sub-branch of the Spanish post office in Pontevedra, which is where the "Correo Vello" (Old Post Office) square takes its name from.

At no. 2 rúa García Escudero, [La Bienvenida](#) haberdashery opened which stocks clothes from over fifty years ago, including some gowns from Goa, the forerunner to Zara.



We now carry on along **rúa Real** <sup>16</sup>, one of the oldest streets in the city. It is said to be 2,000 years old and date back to Roman times. The businesses here are mostly traditional, such as [Casa Verdún](#), which has been a leading name in the hospitality sector in the city since 1909. Today it serves revitalised traditional food and boasts an extensive menu of wines, cheese, and cured meats, which we can enjoy at the bar, in the dining area, or on its tree covered terrace.

A little bit further on, in the 17th century [PAZO DE BARBEITO, PADRÓN Y VEGA](#) (Barbeito, Padrón and Vega Manor House) which we can recognise by the ten Renaissance-inspired faces peering out from the façade, [Cestigar](#), was established over 30 years ago. This is a business specialising in wicker baskets and items. The [Ferretería Gallega](#) ironmonger opened in 1947, and locals and visitors alike have gone there ever since when they need ironwork for old furniture and tools for carpentry and decorating.

We briefly step off rúa Real on our walk and head to **rúa Martín Sarmiento**, where at no. 4 we can find [Fábrica Vintage](#) which is a jumble of everything: handwriting books from the 20s, 60s furniture, modernist bowls, hats, accessories, and small items of old furniture... Heaven for a collector!

At no. 9 we come to [Pontemúsica](#), specialists in musical art with 32 years' experience in



the trade, where we can get our hands on instruments and specialist material.

The selection of shops on the street is topped off, at no. 10, by the [Librería Cao](#) bookshop. The shop opened in another part of the city in 1948. Today its bookshelves are particularly full of art books, perhaps because Pontevedra has the only Faculty of Fine Arts in the whole of Galicia.

We are now on the colourful **Praza de Méndez Núñez** <sup>17</sup> (Méndez Núñez Square), where we are greeted by the statue of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, the famous playwright and novelist who is said to have attended the lively discussions organised by the Muruais family in the mansion known as the Casa del Arco (Arch House), which we can see behind the statue. Admiral Casto Méndez Núñez lived here in the final three years of his life. He takes his place in history as the victor of the Battle of Callao and for





coining the famous phrase “I prefer honour without ships to ships without honour”.

We leave the square through the arch between the mansion and the garden and we carry on along **rúa Don Gonzalo** <sup>18</sup> where we can see the *Despacho de Pan Abelleira*. This bakery, opened in 1980, is a landmark in Pontevedra not only for its handmade bread baked in a wood fired oven but also for its sponge cakes, Vienna bread, pasties, and coca pastries, which are all made on-site. We recommend it for the friendly parrot that says hello as we pass by!

A little bit further on at no. 6 rúa Don Gonzalo is *La Artesa*, which presents a new business concept, with a shop where you can buy fresh bread and have a coffee or frappé surrounded by tarts, baked items, and bon-

**ABOVE** Praza do Teucro  
**FACING** La Navarra

bons which change according to the season and local celebrations, and even pay tribute to fun or cultural events. There is an interesting selection of bonbons or biscuits shaped like pieces of fruit or sardines, Rubik’s cube, cassette tapes, and characters from Star Wars, to mention just a few of the designs.

From here we come to the lively **Praza de Curros Enríquez** <sup>19</sup> (Curros Enríquez Square) and continue on along **rúa Real** and if we are looking for food produce then we can step into no. 15. Here in *O Cisne* they have been selling high-quality loose produce since 1941. And at no. 13 we have *Mímate*, which won the Business with Talen prize in 2015 for its handmade products from natural materials.

Our walk now leads us to the old Plaza del Pan (Bread Square), which is now the **Praza do Teucro** <sup>20</sup> (Teucer Square). Legend has it that Teucer, one of the heroes in the Trojan War, fell in love with the siren Leucoíña, followed her across the sea to this part of the world, and founded the city of Pontevedra here. This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful squares in the city. It is decorated with orange trees, which tells us of the mildness of the climate, and lined by houses with balconies covered in fanciful grills, including of the type known as *costureiros* (sewing boxes), peepholes, and there are numerous mansions bearing the coats of arms of various different families.

These include the Pazo do Marqués de Aranda (Marquis de Aranda Manor House) which has maintained part of the crenellated towers and some attendants who bear the family arms; the ground floor houses the *Marroquinería Casa Bravo* leather goods shop. The square also features the 18th century Pazo do Conde San Román (Count San Román Manor House) and, under the imposing coat of arms of the Pazo dos Gago e Montenegro (Gago E Montenegro Manor House), the *Imprenta Peón* printing house, which is the oldest in Pontevedra. Founded in 1902, writers such as Celso Emilio Ferreiro and Castelao, and illustrators such as Rafael Úbeda, Rafael Alonso, and Conde Corbal had their works published here.

On the adjoining **rúa Princesa** <sup>21</sup> the famous Pontevedra meeting place, *La Navarra*, is still going strong. This pub has over 90 years of history behind it. Its shelves and cupboards hold bottles of the finest vintages, some from when it opened in 1925 and even some which were created for special occasions, such as the royal weddings of Baudouin of Belgium and Fabiola or the then prince and princess and now King and Queen of Spain Felipe VI and Letizia.

We now retrace our steps back to **rúa Te-tuán** <sup>22</sup> and **rúa Dona Tareixa** <sup>23</sup> which will take us to Avenida de Santa María (Saint Mary Avenue). On the way we pass the Capilla del Nazareno (chapel of Jesus



of Nazareth), which only opens on the first Friday in March and is visited by crowds of believers begging to be granted one of the three prayers they ask of Jesus. If we want to dig deeper into the history of Galicia, we can stop at the *Librería Metáfora* bookshop (no. 9 rúa Paio Gómez Charriño), where we can find an extensive selection of books.

On **Avenida de Santa María** <sup>24</sup> we can see the 19th century Palacete de las Mendoza (Mendoza Mansion), designed by architect Alejandro Rodríguez Sesmero, who was also tasked with creating the town plan for Pontevedra after the city walls were pulled down, as well as designing the water supply and sewer system. It is not surprising then that this mansion was the first in the city to have running water. It is currently the main office of the Rías Baixas Tourism Board. Its garden has a striking yew tree which was transformed into a work of art by the artist Paco Pestana.



Very close at hand is the [CITA](#) (Torres Arzobispales Interpretation Centre) which was built underground in the excavated site of this palace-fortress' moat. On a visit here we can find out about a large part of the city's history.

From here we head on to the [REAL BASÍLICA DE SANTA MARÍA A MAIOR](#) (Royal Basilica Of Saint Mary Major), which dates back to the 16th century and was commissioned by the Gremio de Mareantes (Guild of Seamen). A replica of the Cristo del Buen Viaje (Christ of the Good Journey) stands on the southern façade. Inside we can see the original as well as other figures who protected seafarers, such as Santa Bárbara (Saint Barbara), la Vir-

**ABOVE** Calvary at Praza das Cinco Rúas

**FACING** Yew tree in the garden of Palacete de las Mendoza

gen del Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel), and San Telmo (Saint Telmo). The main façade is held to be the finest example of Galician Plateresque and is the work of Cornelis de Holanda and Juan Noble. Among the religious figures and scenes, we can make out, on either side of the rose window, the heads of two famous sailors and conquistadores, Christopher Columbus and Hernán Cortés. The final stage of the visit is to climb up to the bell tower to get a different view of the city.

We now skirt around the church and head down [rúa Isabel II](#) <sup>25</sup>, which leads us to the classic wine and tapas area. On the way, there is a striking poster for [SANTUARIO DAS APARICIÓN](#)S (Shrine of the Apparitions), a cloistered convent of the Order of Santa Dorotea, where Sister Lucia, one of the three children to witness Marian apparitions in Fátima, resided. On this site on 10 December 1925, she saw another apparition of the Virgin Mary and the Baby Jesus. Today the chapel, Sister Lucia's old cell where the apparition took place, can be visited.

We now walk to the **Praza das Cinco Rúas** <sup>26</sup> (Five Streets Square), where one of the best carved calvaries in Galicia stands. It dates from the 18th century and is lavishly decorated with images of Adam and Eve, symbolising original sin, which Christ died for on the cross. Ramón María del Valle-Inclán lived here, as a plaque on the house with a courtyard states. This crossroads is a good

place to tuck into some tapas and take a break in one of the many restaurants here and, weather permitting, sit out on one of the terraces. Continuing our stroll along [rúa do Barón](#) <sup>27</sup>, just a short distance away, we can see the Renaissance mansion known as the [CASA DEL BARÓN](#) (House of the Baron), which dates from the 16th to 17th century and belonged to the counts of Maceda. It was built as a school for neglected children, and then became a salt warehouse and it is even said that a masonic lodge met here prior to it becoming a Parador hotel.

We finish our tour in the always lively **Praza do Peirao** <sup>28</sup> (Wharf Square), which has a good selection of bars, grill houses, and terraces. It is a great place to take in the mouth of the River Lérez, the start of the Pontevedra estuary, and watch the tide coming in and going out. We can take a walk to the O Burgo bridge, which the XIX Roman road runs along and where pilgrims following the Portuguese Way to Santiago have crossed since the Middle Ages.

There are some interesting sights to see at the end of our tour, which may encourage us to delve deeper into the past of this historic city, such as the archaeological ruins of the old dock or the monument that reads: "On these shores was built the Santa María caravel -La Gallega- on which the Pontevedra admiral Christopher Columbus changed the course of the World."

In front of the archaeological ruins (a museum space with information boards in the Praza Valentín García Escudero Valentín (García Escudero Square)) is the Casa Sada Wine Store, a delicatessen specialising in wine, where you can have a tasting and enjoy high quality preserves, cheese, and cured meat.





## Illa das Esculturas

Just a few minutes' walk from the historical centre, on the River Lérez, is a unique space given over to the most innovative art: the ILLA DAS ESCULTURAS (the Island of Sculptures). This project, launched in 1999, was groundbreaking in Spain and resulted in the metamorphosis of a natural area, Covo Island, into a work of art in total harmony with nature.

The artworks in rock from renowned artists such as Giovanni Anselmo, Robert Morris, Ulrich Rückriem, Fernando Casás, José Pedro Croft, Jenny Holzer, Richard Long, Hamilton Finlay, Francisco Leiro, Dan Graham, Anne and Patrick Poirier, and Enrique Velasco encourage us to think about conserving nature and just how beautiful nature is.

Keen hikers can round off their visit on a 13 km out and back trail, which will take them along the course of the river to the Monteporreiro waterfall and viewpoint, the remains of the old Aguas del Lérez spa, the San Benitiño de Lérez monastery, and the bridge known as the Puente de los Franceses (French Bridge) or Ponte Bora.

## Iglesia de Santa Clara

Muy Very close to the old town and beyond the old city walls, on Camino Castellano (today called rúa Santa Clara) stands the IGLESIA

DE SANTA CLARA (church of Saint Claire) one of the best preserved 14th century Gothic churches in Galicia. Inside it is home to many surprises in the finely crafted Baroque reredos, the quality of the frescos adorning the walls and ceilings, the icon-reliquary of San Vicente (Saint Vincent) from the 3rd century, and the resting place of Sister María de San Antonio.

Legend has it that Sister María de San Antonio snuck out of her home dressed as a man so as to go on a pilgrimage from Toledo to Santiago de Compostela. She entered a male convent as an assistant and when she was about to be ordained as a friar she confessed she was a woman and shut herself away in this convent for 22 years. They say she was tirelessly hard-working and she built the entire perimeter wall of the convent with her own hands and even managed to predict her own death, which came in 1616.

**FACING** Illa das Esculturas  
**BELOW** Iglesia de Santa Clara







The wealth of documents on this cloistered convent is huge as the Hermanas Clarisas (Poor Clares) traditionally write down all their life stories. So we have discovered that they even lent money to the most disadvantaged. Taking a small detour on our tour to discover this gem is well worth it.

### Café Moderno

At no. 3 in the small square of San José we can find what was the home of Martínez Bautista, an indiano, a Spanish emigrant who became rich in Latin America, in this case in Cuba. The rest of the building was rented out as homes for wealthy families and the [Cafe Moderno](#) was opened on the ground floor.

The Café Moderno opened its doors in 1903 and caused a stir in the city with its luxurious design and elegance. It was described as wholly unprecedented! It soon became a meeting place and forum of discussion for

intellectuals, politicians, and artists, and left its mark on the history of the city and Galicia. Republicans, Galician nationalists, and socialists met there, and it is even said that it was the place where the First Statute of Autonomy of Galicia was drafted. Castelao, Bóveda, Cabanillas, Paz Andrade, and García Lorca all sat at its tables. It was and still is a magnet for interior design enthusiasts and professionals and still retains interesting paintings from Galician artists from the first half of the 20th century, such as Monteserín, Pintos Fonseca, Carlos Sobrino, and Laxeiro.

The building is a museum in itself after the restoration by the great Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza and today, in addition to the cafe, you can also visit the different rooms which have been set out as exhibition rooms.

The square features [LA TERTULIA](#), a work of art by César Lombra that depicts people around tables listening to the great Pontevedra musician Manuel Quiroga Losada, who took his works and the name of his city to theatres all over the world. The collection of sculptures interact with passers-by as there are two empty chairs where we can have our photo taken alongside the illustrious figures in the piece.

**ABOVE** Café Moderno



galicia