



 XUNTA
DE GALICIA

 Xacobeo 21-22

Ribadavia



a walk of
history and life

Ribadavia



RIBADAVIA LIES IN THE HEART OF THE RIBEIRO REGION AND, AS ITS LATIN NAME "RIPA AVIE", MEANING BANK OF THE AVIA, SUGGESTS, IT WAS FOUNDED AND GREW ALONG THE BANKS OF THE RIVER AVIA. IT WAS THE CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM OF GALICIA IN THE 11TH CENTURY DURING THE REIGN OF KING GARCÍA, A POSSESSION OF THE SARMIENTO FAMILY IN THE 14TH CENTURY, AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RAISED TO THE STATUS OF COUNTY BY THE CATHOLIC MONARCHS OF SPAIN FOR THE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE FAMILY DURING THE RECONQUISTA. THE TOWN IS INCLUDED IN THE CAMINOS DE SEFARD NETWORK OF JEWISH QUARTERS IN SPAIN AS IT HAS ONE OF THE BEST PRESERVED JEWISH QUARTERS IN THE COUNTRY.

Essentials

B Castelo



B Praza Maior



C Igrexa de San Xoán



D Igrexa de Maria Magdalena



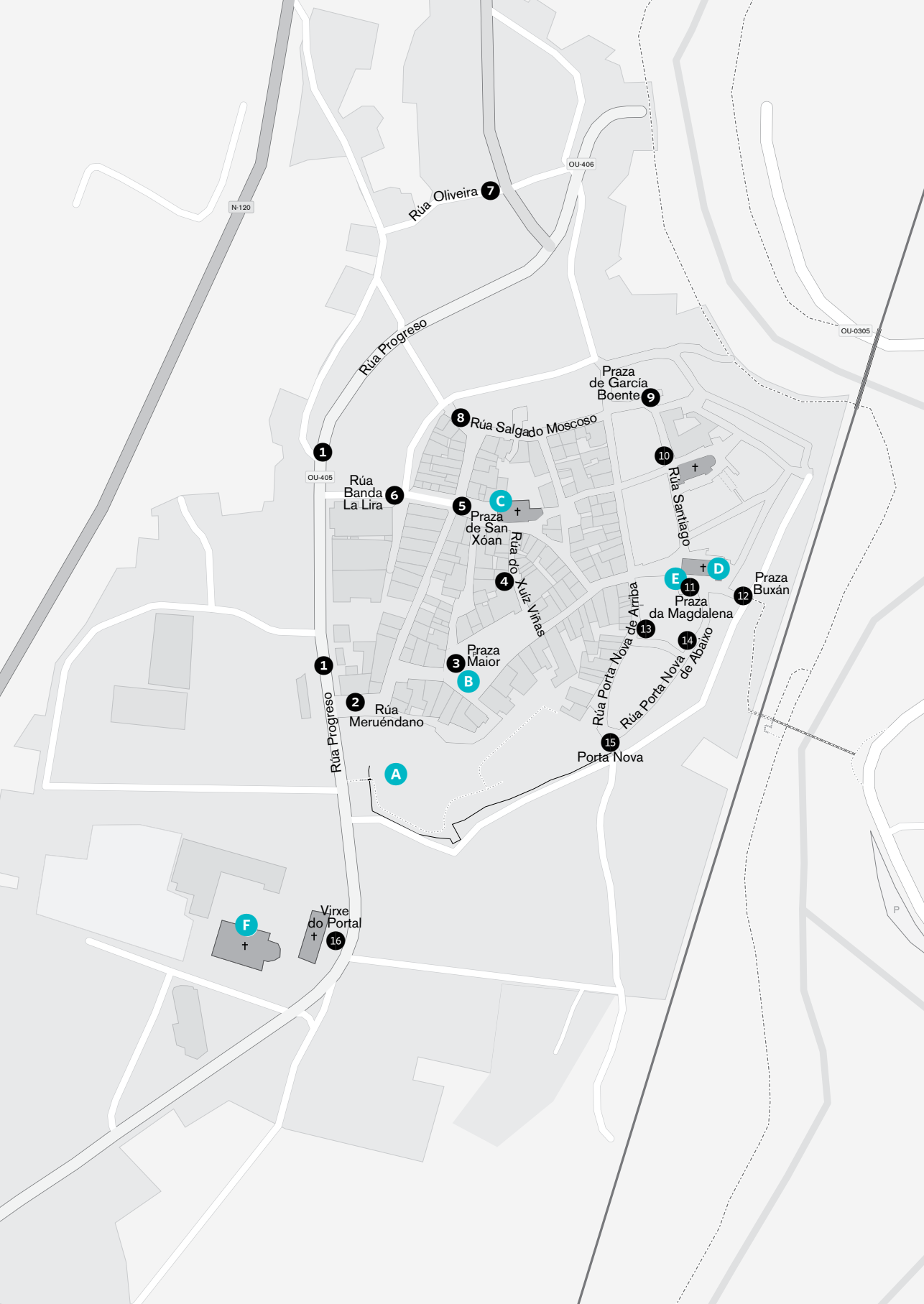
E Barrio Judío



F Igrexa de Santo Domingo



The route



- 1 Rúa do Progreso
- 2 Rúa alcade Meruéndano
- 3 Praza Maior
- 4 Rúa do Xuíz Viñas
- 5 Praza de San Xoán
- 6 Rúa Banda La Lira
- 7 Rúa da Oliveira
- 8 Rúa Salgado Moscoso
- 9 Praza del Dr. García Boente
- 10 Rúa de Santiago
- 11 Praza da Magdalena
- 12 Praza Buxán
- 13 Rúa Porta Nova de Arriba
- 14 Rúa Porta Nova de Abaixo
- 15 Porta Nova
- 16 Rúa Virxe do Portal



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Our tour begins on the town’s main shopping street, **rúa do Progreso 1**, in the shadow of the **CASTLE OF THE COUNTS OF RIBADAVIA**, a towering 15th century fortress that may have been built on the site of an earlier pre-Roman settlement, who chose the location as a strategic site to watch over the area. The castle was built by the Sarmiento family and was used in the instatement ceremonies of the heirs of the family, in which the mayor would present them with the symbolic rods of justice and the keys to the castle. Inside we can see the human-shaped Medieval bu-

rial tombs dug into the rock, which are from the ancient chapel of San Ginés, as well as a water tank, garden, and cellars.

If we are keen to take in the castle from a pleasant terrace, we can stop at **Bar Porta da Cerca**, which specialises in gourmet burgers and a wide range of pincho snacks made from locally-grown, seasonal produce.

Continuing along **rúa Alcade Meruéndano 2**, we find **Restaurante Lantino** on the corner, and we then come to rúa García Penedo, where there is the main office of the **International Theatre Festival**, which is held at the



PREVIOUS PAGES Avia river, Iglesia de Santiago
FACING Castillo de los Condes de Ribadavia
RIGHT Plaza Maior



end of July every year. It dates back to 1963 when the Asociación Abrente (Abrente Association) started to promote Galician culture and language through theatre shows. The first Festival was held in 1984 and is now one of the oldest theatre festivals in Spain.

The second floor of the building is used by the organisers of the History Festival, which was declared a National Tourist Attraction. During the festival in the last week of August the town is taken back to the Medieval



period. Processions in the clothing of the time, falconry displays, the re-enactment of a Jewish wedding, the minting of *maravedí* coins to be used during the event are all key parts of this fun and colourful festival.

The **Praza Maior** 3 (Main Square) 3 is a stone's throw away, where we can find the PALACE OF THE COUNTS OF RIBADAVIA, a Baroque building that belonged to the Sarmiento family. The façade prominently displays the crest of the county featuring the arms of the family, thirteen golden coins, which we will see frequently on our visit to the town. The Sarmiento (lit. shoot) surname seems to originate in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212). It is said that during the Reconquista, Pedro Ruiz gave a hundred flaming branches to his knights to throw into the enemy's camp and let the resulting blaze claim

ABOVE Bell tower
BELOW Shield of the town

victory for them. Nowadays, the building houses the Tourist Information Centre and the Galician Jewish Information Centre.

The CASA CONSISTORIAL (Town Hall) lies opposite in a 16th century building built to house the grain exchange and the meetings of the town council. One of the most important events to happen there was the drawing up of the wine ordinances in the 16th century. They are why the WIPO (World International Property Organisation) recognises Ribeiro as the oldest Denomination of Origin in Spain.

On the right side of the building, the TORRE CAMPANARIO (bell tower) has been preserved, which bears the town coat of arms, including the castle and the bridge over the River Avia, the sun and the moon, and two wings on the edges in reference to the fame of Ribadavia flying all over the world in the sale of its famous wines. The 1902 mechanical clock is worthy of special mention. Every



day it needs to be wound up again because the spring does not last longer than 30 hours. The clock is wound up with a crank in two different points: the half-hours need 12 turns and the hours need 142. The crank raises some weights that are located below the ground level of the square. The finishing touch to the bell tower is a decorative iron piece known widely as *O galo e a figueira* (the rooster and the fig tree).

Rodean The square is lined by many bars and restaurants that welcome us in to take a seat in their lively terraces, such as Café Rectoral, Taparía Vinoteca, Ribeiro e Xamón, Rebus, Restaurante Plaza, and La huella del gato. Some of these places still have the arches and arcades from the old cellars, which makes them just the right place to sample some of the local wine varieties: reds, rosés,

ABOVE Iglesia de San Xoán
BELOW Rúa do Cárcere



tostados, and sparkling wines. The Ribeiro Denomination of Origin brings together roughly 5,500 wine growers and 115 wineries and boutique *colleiteiro* wineries. The latter work with small batches to produce no more than 60,000 litres a year, which makes them hard to find outside the county.

From the Praza Maior we head down **rúa do Xuíz Viñas** 4, the old Cárcere (Jail) road, and at no. 2 we can spot a plaque that commemorates the three brave sisters who hel-

ped some 500 Jewish people flee to Portugal in the 1940s. Lola Touza had a kiosk at the train station, which was famous for her doughnuts, almond pastries, and coffee liqueur. From this spot she provided accommodation and a means of escape to some of the Jews who passed through the town. She was helped by her sisters Amparo and Julia, a taxi driver, a boat owner, and the Evangelist, a former emigrant who acted as an interpreter. The story was brought to light in 1964 when Isaac Retzmann in New York tried to find out

ABOVE Cruz de ocho puntas de la iglesia de San Xoán
BELOW Plaza de Abastos de la Rúa Progreso



what had happened to the woman who had helped him.

We continue our tour onwards to the **IGLESIA DE SAN XOÁN** (church of Saint John), founded by the Knights Hospitaller, who set up a hospital in the town to attend to pilgrims travelling from Braga to Santiago de Compostela. The Town Council took over the hospital in the 16th century and for a while it was used as the town council meeting place. An eight-pointed cross, the symbol of the Order, can be seen on the gable above the door to the rectory. The most striking aspect is the variety of lavish Romanesque decoration with brackets, metopes, eaves, windows, and doors all over this 12th century building.

The area around the **Praza de San Xoán** 5 (Saint John's Square) is dotted with traditional shops, such as the *Calzados Zoila* shoe shop, the *Librería Imprenta* bookshop, *Floravia* selling craft items, accessories, and



fashion jewellery, and the *Moda Paycon* clothes shop, which has been open since 1978. *As Casiñas* is also found here. This is an innovative project in tourist accommodation management, which makes use of converted buildings in the old town of Ribadavia and the county of Riberio.

Our tour takes us along **rúa Banda La Lira** 6 (Lyre band street). The name of the street is linked to the Banda A Lira group, who started out in a Philharmonic Society founded in Ribadavia in 1850, which would adopt this new name in the 1980s. They are still active today, promoting music in the town, and are considered the oldest band in Galicia.

ABOVE Farmacia Carrera botamen
BELOW Iglesia de Santa María de Oliveira

We now come to **rúa do Progreso**, where the PLAZA DE ABASTOS (food market) is located in a monumental 1929 building. If you love fresh, organic, and seasonal produce you simply must take a look inside.

We leave the market on to **rúa do Progreso** 1, the main shopping street in Ribadavia that has interesting bars and restaurants such as Café-Bar O Morto at no. 26, whose name translates roughly as The Dead One Cafe-Bar and seems to come from when people from the local area came into town to buy the famous Ribadavia coffins and left them in the bar as they had a drink. Another iconic bar is Café-Bar Moderno (no. 51), which has hosted

a dance hall, billiards hall, and variety shows over the more than a hundred years it's been open. Furthermore, the Comité Republicano de Ribadavia (Republican Committee of Ribadavia) was formed here and the Asociación de Emigrantes de Ribadavia en Buenos Aires (Association of Ribadavia Emigrants in Buenos Aires) also met here. The bar has been run by the same family since the 1930s.

Across the road is the Farmacia García Carrera pharmacy, which opened in 1934 and is where we can see a varied collection

BELOW Praza de García Boente



of traditional apothecary jars. Many other businesses set up shop on this street, where you can get anything from souvenirs to a good bottle of Ribeiro wine.

We retrace our steps to head down **rúa da Oliveira** 7 and reach the romantic spot that is the IGLESIA DE SANTA MARÍA DE OLIVEIRA (church of Saint Mary of the Olive Tree), with its old graveyard, atrium full of trees, and calvary. The 12th Romanesque church stood beyond the town walls, which was why it was known as the *Burgo* (Fortress) church in the past. Inside the chapel, on the ribbed vault of the apse we can see the coats of arms of families connected to the Seat of the Inquisition on the keystones.

After visiting the church, we head back to rúa do Progreso and on the corner with rúa Salgado Moscoso we can see the BANCA NOGUEIRA (Nogueira Bank) building. This bank dates back to a fabric shop in the late



19th century which expanded its business by offering correspondent account services and selling lottery tickets. In the 1940s it specialised in providing banking services to emigrants from the county to the Americas and then expanded its services to the rest of the province in the 60s, before it was taken over by Banco Central.

We now walk along **rúa Salgado Moscoso** 8, which takes us to the PRAZA DA FONTE DE PRATA (Silver Fountain Square), where there is a fountain that is said to have the best water in the area. The Pastelería Conde patisserie opened up here and is now run by the fourth generation of the same family, who make life a little bit sweeter for locals and visitors alike with their *almendrado* biscuits,

ABOVE Convento de San Francisco

BELOW Puente de Hierro del Ferrocarril



melindre sweet breads, and *dulce de coco* pastries, all made according to centuries-old recipes.

We continue our tour along rúa Salgado Moscoso, which was previously formed by rúa da Pescadería and rúa da Fonte Arrastrada (Dragged Fountain street). The fountain tells us this is one of the most beautiful spots in Ribadavia, a small square lined by three stone houses with the typical outdoor stairways and iron balconies that are so

representative of traditional architecture in the county.

We now come to the **Praza del Dr. García Boente** 9 (Dr. García Boente Square), where on the corner with rúa San Martiño, stands the 16th building known as the CASA DE LA INQUISICIÓN (House of the Inquisition), where we can see the coats of arms of noble families linked to the Inquisition: Puga, García Camba, Bahamonde, and Mosquera-San-

ABOVE Iglesia de Santiago
BELOW Iglesia de Santiago
FACING, ABOVE Las Nisas
FACING, BELOW Plaza Buxán



dova. The families who took part in the trials were exempt from taxes, although it seems that Ribadavia never had an Inquisition Tribunal as the cases were heard in Santiago de Compostela.

The case that made Ribadavia famous was the trial of the informer known as “El mal-sín” (the informer), Jerónimo Bautista de Mena, who in 1606 supplied the Inquisition with a list of two hundred people accused of being Judaizers, which included his own mother who had died two years earlier and his 15 and 13 year old brothers. He also accused magistrates, sheriffs, students, doctors, lawyers, and traders. A year later, the informant was found murdered in a Ribadavia street and the culprit was never found.

In the area around the Praza del Dr. García Boente, along rúa dos Fornos, we can make our way to the viewpoint over the River Avia, where we can take in the IRON PUENTE DEL



FERROCARRIL (Railway bridge), which is in the Eiffel style and from 1881 onwards made it easier to export wine barrels and coffins, two of the town’s main goods. To the left, the PUENTE DE SAN FRANCISCO (Saint Francis Bridge), which the bishop of Tui, San Pedro González Termo, ordered the building of in the 13th century, leads us to the CONVENTO DE SAN FRANCISCO (convent of Saint Francis).

Heading up **rúa de Santiago** 10, we come to the PAZO DEL MARQUÉS DE BAHAMONDE (Marquis of Bahamonde manor house), also known as the Foundation manor house, as the old owner, the Ribadavia industrialist and philanthropist José Martínez Vázquez, left it in his will as a place to be used for educational purposes. Nowadays, it is home to the ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM, which boasts one of the finest collections of books and documents on the ethnography and history of Galicia, including sections on ethnography, photography, pottery, and textiles. The build-



ding seems to date back to the 16th century, although we now mostly see an 18th and 19th century building. The old kitchen, bakery, and cellars, which lead off the internal courtyard, have been preserved.

The [IGLESIA DE SANTIAGO](#) (church of Santiago) is a little bit further along, which is a fine example of the traditional Romanesque Galician style from the late 12th century, although additions have been made to it over time, such as the steeple. The lavish decoration is clear to see on its capitals, rose window, and windows, some of which show bunches of grapes, in a reference to grape growing. Perhaps the strangest part is the south side, with the Santa Catalina (Saint Catherine) capital, where there is an odd inscription: “Joha(n) Mjr fe / zo laurar / esta pedra»” (Juan made me work this stone), as well as a grave with the Maltese cross, which undoubtedly holds the remains of a knight from the Order. We recommend you take a

walk around the outside of the church to see its size and attractive apse.

There are many images inside, including the stone Santiago from the school of Maestro Mateo and the Christ of the Humble from the school of Maestro de Sobrado, which shows a different version of the iconography of Christ tied to the column.

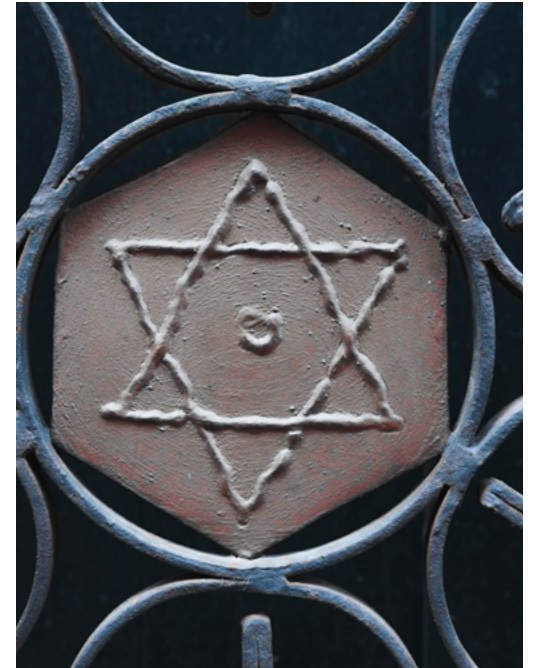
There is a small confectionery, [As Nisas](#), in front of the church, where they have been making Jewish sweets, melindre sweet breads, honey fritters, and almendrado biscuits for over 70 years. This tells us we are close to the Jewish quarter, the heart of which is the **Praza da Magdalena** ¹¹ (Madeleine Square), where a plaque on the ground states we are in one of the places included in the Caminos de Sefard Network of Jewish Quarters in Spain.

The first Jewish people to settle in Ribadavia came in the 11th century when King Garcia choose the town to be the capital of the Kingdom of Galicia. They managed the financial affairs of the Kingdom and were experts in the wine trade. When the Catholic Monarchs ordered Jews be expelled in 1492 some left but many converted to Christianity. Both communities, Jewish and Catholic, made significant contributions to the prosperity of the region. We should remember the time when they fought together against the Duke of Lancaster in 1386. A historian at the

time estimated there were 1,500 people in the Jewish community in the town, which today seems a little bit high.

The most representative monument in the square is the [IGLESIA DE SANTA MARÍA MAGDALENA](#) (church of Saint Mary Magdalene), an ancient temple where Jewish converts were able to worship, which is today a Baroque building used for cultural activities. At the back of the church, we can come on to the **Praza Buxán** ¹² (Buxán Square), where we see the [PORTA FALSA](#) (False Gate) or side gate, one of the three remaining gates in the old walls, which led to the River Avia and the mill. This spot offers us a good panoramic view over the river, with the typical plots or terraces, where the grapes that go into the famous Ribeiro wine are still grown.

We head back to the Praza da Madalena and come to the [Gastrobar O Birrán](#), on the ground floor of a 16th century Renaissance mansion, where the 12th century synagogue is supposedly located. In Ribadavia it was called Torá after the sacred Torah text that was read during ceremonies. The synagogue is most likely near other important buildings for the community, such as the Yeshivah school where the sacred texts were studied, the butcher's which did not sell any pork products, the bakery to make unleavened bread, and the pool for ritual washing on Fridays prior to the Sabbath, a day of prayer and rest in Judaism.



We make our way from the Praza da Magdalena along rúa Merelles Caula, an ancient street in the Jewish quarter, to **rúa Porta Nova de Arriba** ¹³ where we find the [Taberna O Papuxa](#) bar. This is a much loved spot in Ribadavia, which has been open for two hundred years and has the unique feature of a dirt floor because that offers the best conditions of humidity and freshness for wine. The long benches help conversation flow and most interestingly of all you serve yourself directly from the barrels. Under the cellar there is a tunnel to the River Avia, which legend has it was used by Jewish people to flee after the order for the expulsion was issued by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492.

FACING Hebrew sweets

ABOVE Detail of a fence of the Jewish Quarter



From here we can come onto *travesa da Porta Nova* (New Gate side street) and at no. 7 there is a plaque that records the birthplace here of *María de los Ángeles Gulín*, an honoured citizen of Ribadavia, considered by critics to be the best soprano of her day. Nicknamed “el terror de los tenores” (the terror of the tenors), her impressive voice made all those who shared a stage with her shrivel and after she won the Verdi Voice prize in 1968, she focused her career on performing Verdi operas.

We now reach *rúa Porta Nova de Abaixo* ¹⁴, where the typical building style of the Jewish community is still present in the houses with lintels and small masonry blocks, wooden balconies, and under those a small plinth with a double door, one for the

ABOVE Porta Nova
BELOW Detail of the city wall

business and one for the home. The goods were put on display under the balcony and they could work when the weather was bad.

We pass through the **Porta Nova** ¹⁵ or *Porta Celanova* (New Gate or New Cell gate) and can see the remains of the TOWN WALLS which protected Ribadavia from the 12th century onwards. Some sections stand five metres tall. The gate has battlements and is decorated with the town coat of arms. We climb up *rúa Extramuros* and come to **rúa Virxe do Portal** ¹⁶, where there is a church dedicated to the patron saint of Ribadavia and Ribeiro.

The IGLESIA DE LA VIRXE DO PORTAL (church of the Virgin of the Gateway) has a startlingly sober classic exterior, in contrast to the lavish Baroque decoration inside. The cypress wood reredos displays the Mysteries of the Rosary on its medallions, which form the curious image of Mary holding the body of the deceased Jesus in her lap. The two



images are wildly disproportionate as Jesus, depicted as a man, is child-sized.

We conclude our tour at the IGLESIA DE SANTO DOMINGO (church of Saint Dominci). This is the second site to be built by the Dominicans in Galicia and is held to be one of the finest examples of Galician Gothic religious architecture. Inside there is a good collection of 15th to 18th century funerary art. The convent was a centre of learning from 1299 onwards, with studies in Theology, Ethics, and Grammar. It became a civil institution in the 19th century.

Café-Bar Calvo is close at hand, which on Sundays, holidays, and the 10th and 25th of every month, at the same time as the fortnightly fair, serves *pulpeira* octopus street food in addition to its normal menu. The bar, especially its lovely terrace, is a wonderful spot to enjoy a good Ribeiro wine with *á feira* (fair-style) octopus.



ABOVE Iglesia de Santo Domingo
BELOW Detail of the Porta Nova



Iglesia de San Francisco and stroll along the Avia

The Iglesia y Convento de San Francisco (church and convent of Saint Francis) are possibly located on top of the Roman Abróbi-ga or Ripa Avia, the site where the town was first settled prior to the reign of King Garcia. The Franciscans took up residence in the town in the 14th century and it became their third largest site in Galicia; shortly before the confiscation there were 70 friars. The church is the most modern one in Ribadavia. It is dedicated to San Antonio and boasts a good collection of Baroque reredos, The

atrium of the church offers marvellous views of the River Avia and Ribadavia.

The views can be topped off with a walk along the river to the point where it meets the River Miño. On the way you are treated to a pleasant view of the Historical-Artistic Site of Ribadavia and the lush countryside around it all the way to the confluence of the River Avia and the River Miño.

FACING Prexigueiro thermal baths

BELOW San Xes de Francelos



San Xes de Francelos and Prexigueiro thermal baths

Just five kilometres from Ribadavia, in the parish of Santa María Madalena de Francelos, is the small Visigoth chapel dedicated to San Xes (Saint Genesius), which was part of an old Medieval monastery. It still shows architectural and decorative features of pre-Romanesque art depicting scenes from the Bible, such as the Flight into Egypt and Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem. This church is the only one of its kind in Galicia and is an essential stop for anyone who appreciates and studies Early Middle Ages art.

Following the course of the River Miño for four kilometres, we reach the Prexigueiro thermal springs where we can enjoy the thermal baths which combine an outdoor Japanese area that is in harmony with nature and treatments using local grapes (Treixadura and Mencía). The perfect place to relax.

Galician Museum of Wine

The Galician Museum of Wine was established in the old house of the parish priest in Santo André de Camporredondo with the goal of promoting the cultural heritage of wine growing in Galicia. The eight exhibition rooms contain information on the five denominations of origin in Galicia, grape varieties, soil conditions, the transformation of the landscape, the evolution of grape harvesting practices, and the different trades tied to the production of wine. On our visit we can see the old winery and cellar-cave dug into the rock, as this building has been used for making wine since the Middle Ages.





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