

Galicia



If the regions of Spain were identified by colour, Galicia's might well be green tinged with grey. Just as Andalucía wears its dazzling whitewash and Castilla-La Mancha bathes in the burnt red and dusty olive green of its sun-scorched plains, so granite walls and slate rooftops against a verdant rural background seem symbolic of Galicia. Without doubt, the often inclement weather contributes to the impression. You *always* have to be ready for rain here.

Galicia's wild coastline is frayed up and down its length by a series of majestic *rias* (inlets or estuaries). In the south, Río Miño divides Galicia from Portugal, and in the east, Galicia is separated from Spain's *meseta* (central tableland) by the western end of the Cordillera Cantábrica and associated ranges. Frenetic deforestation has unfortunately stripped much of Galicia of its indigenous trees, mostly replaced by eucalyptus plantations.

Many travellers make a beeline for Santiago de Compostela and no one can blame them. It is one of Spain's most engaging urban centres. Beyond it, however, lies plenty more: Pontevedra, Lugo, A Coruña and Vigo to name a few. Along the coasts, the popular Rías Baixas and less well-known Costa da Morte and Rías Altas are dotted with beaches, bays and fishing villages, and you'll see some of Spain's wildest coast towards Cabo Ortegal in the northwest. Inland, refreshingly green countryside and old stone villages, castles and churches await exploration. And except in Santiago, other tourists you meet on your travels will mostly be Spanish.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Marvel at the cathedral and wander the medieval streets of **Santiago de Compostela** (p540)
- Explore the coves, beaches, fishing villages and cliffs of the **Costa da Morte** (p558), **Rías Baixas** (p560) and **Rías Altas** (p554)
- Feast on Spain's best **seafood** (see the boxed text, p547)
- Get out into the Galician countryside along the **Camino de Santiago** (p96 and p97)
- Groove to *gaiteros* (bagpipers) at Galicia's summer **music festivals** (see the boxed text, p557)
- Savour the atmosphere of historic **Pontevedra** (p562) and **Lugo** (p575)
- Soak up the urban excitement of **A Coruña** (p550) and **Vigo** (p566)



■ AREA: 29,574 SQ KM

■ AVE SUMMER TEMP: HIGH 24°C,
LOW 13°C

■ POP: 2.85 MILLION



History

By the Iron Age Galicia was populated by people living in *castros*, villages of circular stone huts surrounded by defensive perimeters. Most Galicians believe these ancestors were Celts, though sceptics claim that Galicia's Celtic origins are an invention of romantic 19th-century Galician nationalists. The Romans gave the area its name, initially *Gallaecia*. Galicia was then ruled by the Germanic Suevi for most of the 5th and 6th centuries AD, before the Visigoths asserted themselves. Little touched by the 8th-century Muslim invasion, Galicia was under the control of the Christian kingdom of Asturias by 866.

The big event in the area's medieval history was the 'rediscovery' of the grave of Santiago

Apóstol (St James the Apostle) in 813, at what would become Santiago de Compostela. The site grew into a rallying symbol for the Christian Reconquista of Spain, and pilgrims from all over Europe began trekking to Santiago to redeem their sins. In the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries the city rivalled Rome and even Jerusalem in importance as a Christian pilgrimage site. For more on the pilgrimage, past and present, see the Camino de Santiago chapter (p89).

By the time the Reconquista was completed in 1492, Galicia had become an impoverished backwater in which Spain's centralist-minded Catholic Monarchs (Reyes Católicos), Isabel and Fernando, had already begun to supplant the local tongue and traditions with Castilian

methods and language. The Rexurdimento, an awakening of Galician national consciousness, did not surface until late in the 19th century, and then suffered a 40-year interruption during the Franco era.

Rural, with its own language, and much ignored by the rest of Spain, Galicia is still today in many aspects another country. Galicians have traditionally looked outward for solutions, with fishing and emigration (to Latin America and, more recently, other European countries) long their mainstays, as well as agriculture. Galicia is home to half Spain's fishing fleet, but with world fish stocks falling, its fishing communities face an uncertain future. Shipbuilding, auto assembly, textiles (Galicia is home to the world's second-biggest clothing company, Inditex, owner of Zara and Bershka) and, increasingly, tourism provide many alternative jobs. Developing their Latin American connections, some Galicians have raked in fortunes through drug smuggling. Only in the USA, Colombia and, some years, Mexico, is more cocaine seized than in Spain – and most of that is in Galicia.

One relatively recent event that drew attention to Galicia was the sinking of the oil tanker *Prestige* off the coast in 2002. Oil slicks inflicted serious damage on hundreds of kilometres of coastal habitat and the key seafood and fishing industries, and 300,000 seabirds of over 70 species were among the casualties of the worst ecological disaster in Spain's history. The government's lackadaisical response spawned a grassroots political movement, Nunca Máis (Never Again), which spontaneously mobilised to clean up the coast, boosted Galician national consciousness and probably contributed to the final unseating in 2005 of Galicia's long-standing regional president, a former minister in the Franco dictatorship named Manuel Fraga. Today the *Prestige's* effects on Galicia's coastline seem to have been erased and fish and seafood hauls have recovered, even if concerns linger over remaining seabed deposits.

Language

Long suppressed during the Franco years (strange, since Franco was born in Galicia), the Galician language (*galego* or, in Castilian, *gallego*) sounds and looks like a cross between Portuguese and Castilian. Like both those tongues, it's another Romance language (latter-day version of Latin).

Galician is widely spoken, especially in rural areas, and in recent years has been strongly pushed as the main regional language. The Galician versions of city, town and village names are now pretty well universal on signposts in Galicia (and starting to appear beyond its borders, too).

In this chapter we use the names you're likely to encounter during your travels. By and large, this means Galician spellings for towns, villages and geographical features. Beaches tend to be *praia* rather than *playa*, islands *illa*, not *isla*, and mountain ranges *serra* instead of *sierra*. We give streets (Galician: *rúa*/Castilian: *calle*), squares (*praza/plaza*), churches (*igreja/iglesia*), monasteries (*mosteiro/monasterio*) and the like whichever name is most prominently used.

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

pop 88,000 / elevation 260m

There can be few cities in the world as beautiful as Santiago that are founded on the basis of so preposterous a story. The corpse of Santiago Apóstol (St James), the myth relates, was transported in a stone boat from the Holy Land to the far side of Spain by two disciples after his execution in Jerusalem in AD 44. They landed at Padrón and buried Santiago in a spot 17km inland.

In 813 the grave was supposedly rediscovered by a religious hermit following a guiding star (hence 'Compostela', a corruption of the Latin *campus stellae*, field of the star). The saint's purported grave became a welcome rallying symbol for Christian Spain, the Asturian king Alfonso II turned up to have a church erected above the holy remains, pilgrims began flocking to it and the rest is history.

Aesthetically the city has only improved with age and various architectural additions down the centuries. Apart from the undisputed splendour of its gold-tinged monuments and the charm of its medieval streets, Santiago de Compostela is today a very lively city with a huge summer contingent of international pilgrims and tourists, and during college term a student population of up to 40,000. There's a great entertainment and nightlife scene to tap into at the end of a day investigating the city's history and culture.

HISTORY

By 1075 when the Romanesque basilica was begun and the pilgrimage was becoming a major European phenomenon, Santiago de Compostela had already been raided on various occasions by the Normans and Muslims. Bishop Diego Gelmírez obtained archbishopric status for Santiago in 1100 and added numerous churches in the 12th century, when homage paid to its saint brought in a flood of funds. Enthusiasm for the pilgrimage to Santiago peaked around then, and the following centuries were marked by internecine squabbling between rival nobles, damped down by Isabel and Fernando after the Reconquista. After misguidedly siding with the Carlists in the 1830s, Santiago de Compostela slipped into the background. Only since the 1980s, as capital of the autonomous region of Galicia and a rediscovered tourist and pilgrimage target, has the city been revitalised.

ORIENTATION

Santiago's compact old town, focused on the cathedral and its surrounding squares and almost completely pedestrianised, contains most of the monuments and places to stay and eat. Praza de Galicia marks the boundary between the old town and the modern shopping area to its south.

The train station is about a 15-minute walk downhill (south) from the city centre, and the bus station is marginally further to the northeast of the centre.

INFORMATION

Emergency

Policía Nacional (☎ 981 55 11 00; Avenida de Rodrigo de Padrón 101)

Internet Access

Bbig Internet (Rúa da Senra 19; per hr €1.75;

h 10am-12.30am)

Cyber Nova 50 (Rúa Nova 50; per hr €1.20; h 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, 10am-midnight Sun)

Medical Services

Farmacia Valdés (☎ 981 58 58 95; Cantón do Toural 1; h 24hr)

Hospital Clínico Universitario (☎ 981 95 00 00; Travesa da Choupana)

Money

Banks and ATMs are dotted about the centre.

Banco BBVA (Rúa do Vilar 33) A handy bank.

Oficina de Acogida de Peregrinos

People who have covered at least the last 100km of the Camino de Santiago on foot, or the last 200km by bicycle, with spiritual or religious motives can obtain their 'Compostela' certificate to prove it at the **Pilgrims' Reception Office** (☎ 981 56 24 19; www.archicompostela.org in Spanish; Rúa do Vilar 1; h 9am-9pm).

Post

Main post office (Rúa das Orfas 17; h 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat)

Tourist Information

City tourist office (☎ 981 55 51 29; www.santiago.turismo.com; Rúa do Vilar 63; h 9am-9pm Jun-Sep, 9am-2pm & 4-7pm Oct-May)

Regional tourist office (☎ 981 58 40 81; www.tur.galicia.es; Rúa do Vilar 30-32; h 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri) Shares the Xacobeo office at Rúa do Vilar 30-32; the website is a terrific multilingual resource on all Galicia.

Xacobeo office (☎ 981 57 20 04; www.xacobeo.es; Rúa do Vilar 30-32; h 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm & 5-7pm Sat, 11am-2pm Sun) Offers information on the Camino de Santiago.

SIGHTS

Catedral del Apóstol

Anyone who has journeyed along the Camino de Santiago will hardly be disappointed on entering Praza do Obradoiro to behold the lavish baroque façade of the **Catedral del Apóstol** (h 8am-9pm). Before this elaborately festive façade was built in the 18th century, the less overwhelming but artistically unparalleled **Pórtico de la Gloria** (Galician: Porta da Gloria) – now behind the baroque façade – was the first scene to greet weary pilgrims. The bulk of the cathedral was built between 1075 and 1211, in Romanesque style, and the Pórtico de la Gloria was its original façade. Much of the 'bunting' (the domes, statues and endless flourishes) came later.

The baroque icing on the Romanesque cake undoubtedly mutes the impact of the Pórtico de la Gloria, but it has also served to protect from the elements the sculptures of Maestro Mateo, the master architect and sculptor placed in charge of the cathedral-building programme in the late 12th century by Fernando II of León. The main figure in the portico's central archway is Christ risen. At his feet and hands are the four Evangelists, and beside them are angels with the crown of thorns and other instruments connected with Jesus' passion. In an arc above are the



24 musicians said in the Apocalypse to sit around the heavenly throne. Below Christ's feet is represented Santiago and popular belief is that the figure below him is Maestro Mateo. Bump your head on it three times and you're supposed to acquire some of Mateo's genius; the problem is that Mateo's statue is the one on the other side, kneeling facing the altar,

while the popular but mistaken head probably belongs to Hercules (holding open the mouths of two lions). Some people bump both heads to cover all options. Another tradition calls for a brief prayer as you place your fingers in the five holes created above Hercules' head by the repetition of this very act by millions of faithful over the centuries.

INFORMATION		SLEEPING		RESTAURANTS	
Banco BBVA.....	1 C3	Hostal Alameda.....	23 B3	Restaurant Sobrinos del Padre.....	48 C1
Bbigg Internet.....	2 B3	Hostal Alfonso.....	24 A2	Restaurante Casa Camilo.....	49 B2
City Tourist Office.....	3 B3	Hostal Barbantes.....	25 B2	Restaurante Don Gaiferos.....	50 C3
Cyber Nova 50.....	4 C3	Hostal Libredón.....	26 B2	Restaurante Ó 42.....	51 B3
Farmacia Valdés.....	5 C3	Hostal Pazo de Agra.....	27 C3		
Main Post Office.....	6 B3	Hostal Seminario Mayor.....	28 C2	DRINKING	
Oficina de Acogida de Peregrinos.....	7 C2	Hostal Suso.....	29 B3	A Reixa.....	52 C3
Policía Nacional.....	8 B3	Hotel Airas Nunes.....	30 C2	Bar-Tolo.....	53 C2
Regional Tourist Office.....	(see 9)	Hotel Costa Vella.....	31 C1	Borriquita de Belém.....	54 C2
Xacobeo Office.....	9 B2	Hotel Entrecercas.....	32 B3	Café Atlántico.....	(see 39)
		Hotel Real.....	33 C3	hs.....	55 C2
		Hotel Rua Villar.....	34 B2	Modus Vivendi.....	56 C2
		Hotel Tránsito dos Gramáticos.....	35 C3	Momo.....	57 C2
		Hotel Virxe da Cerca.....	36 C2	Pub Desván.....	58 C2
		Parador Hostal dos Reis		ENTERTAINMENT	
		Católicos.....	37 B2	A Casa das Crechas.....	59 C2
		Pensión Campanas de Sar.....	13 D5	Conga 8.....	60 C2
		Fuente de los Caballos.....	14 C2	Dado Dadá.....	61 B4
		Hostal dos Reis Católicos.....	(see 37)	Discoteca Liberty.....	62 B4
		Mosteiro de San Martiño Pinario.....	(see 28)	El Buho.....	63 B4
		Mosteiro de San Paio de Antealtares.....	15 C2	Sala Capitol.....	64 C3
		Museo da Catedral.....	16 B2	SHOPPING	
		Museo das Peregrinacións.....	17 C1	Sargadelos.....	65 C2
		Museo do Pobo Galego.....	18 D1		
		Museo Granell.....	19 B3	TRANSPORT	
		Pazo de Raxoi.....	20 B2	Airport Bus Stop.....	66 B4
		Pazo de Xelmírez.....	21 B2	Bus No 5 To Bus Station.....	67 B3
		Puerta Santa.....	22 B2	Bus No 5 To Bus Station.....	68 D2
				Bus No 6 from Centre.....	69 B5
				Bus No 6 to Centre.....	70 B4
				Bus No 6 To Train Station.....	71 C2

The remarkably lifelike figures on the right side of the portico are apostles, while those to the left represent Old Testament prophets.

Approaching the Churrigueresque Altar Mayor (Main Altar), you'll notice an opening and stairs on the right side. Follow the crowds to embrace the 13th-century statue of Santiago. You emerge on the left side then proceed down some steps to contemplate what you are assured is the tomb of Santiago.

The cathedral's many artistic and architectural riches fill guidebooks of their own. Try to make more than one visit to do it justice.

You may catch one of the special Masses where the world's greatest dispenser of incense, the *botafumeiro*, is swung heftily across the transept by an expert team using an ingenious pulley system – an unforgettable sight (see the boxed text, p544).

A special pilgrims' Mass is celebrated at noon daily. Others Masses are at 9.30am and 7.30pm daily, 6pm Saturday and Sunday and 1.30pm Sunday.

MUSEO DA CATEDRAL

To the right of the cathedral's façade is the main entrance to the Cathedral Museum (9% 981

56 05 27; admission €5; h 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Jun-Sep, 10am-1.30pm & 4-6.30pm Oct-May, closed Sun afternoon).

The museum includes the cathedral's *claustr* (cloister; inside this entrance), treasury and crypt, and the Pazo de Xelmírez on the north side of the cathedral.

The cloister is a successful mix of Late Gothic and Plateresque styles. Rooms on several floors around it contain displays on the cathedral's development from early shrine to today's complex structure, an impressive collection of religious art and the lavishly decorated 18th-century *sala capitular* (chapter house). Maestro Mateo's original stone choir (*coro*) has been reconstituted and is on view beside the main entrance.

The crypt, entered from the foot of the cathedral's Praza do Obradoiro steps, is notable for its 12th-century architecture and rich decoration.

The Gothic Pazo de Xelmírez was built for Bishop Diego Gelmírez in 1120. In its Sala de Ceremonias, the main banquet hall, exquisite little wall busts depict feasters and musicians, plus the odd king and juggler. Bishop Gelmírez's biggest contribution to Santiago de Compostela was to resuscitate the myth

SANTIAGO FROM ABOVE

Fascinating hour-long cathedral **roof tours** (€ 981 55 29 85; €10; 11 hourly 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sun) start in the Pazo de Xelmírez (tickets are sold inside the *pazo* entrance). Taking this tour you'll be following the steps of medieval pilgrims who completed their trek by climbing to the roof and burning their clothes beneath the Cruz dos Farrapos (Cross of the Rags) up there – symbolically casting aside the old and starting a new life. You'll also see the cathedral's interior from above and get a fascinatingly different angle on the town around it. Some tours are given in English.

of the Battle of Clavijo. Supposedly Santiago had joined Ramiro I of Asturias in this *fiesta* of Moor-slaying in 844, for which the grateful king promised to dedicate the first fruits of every harvest to the saint. Gelmírez turned the probably mythical battle into one of his city's biggest sources of revenue.

Around the Cathedral

However much the cathedral dominates the heart of Santiago, the area around it is rich in other architectural jewels. The Renaissance *Hostal dos Reis Católicos* stretches across the northern end of Praza do Obradoiro. Built to shelter the poor and infirm by Isabel and Fernando, it now shelters well-off travellers instead, as a *parador* (luxury, state-owned hotel; see p546). Along the western side of the square is the elegant 18th-century Pazo de Raxoi, now the city hall.

A stroll around the cathedral takes you through some of Santiago's most inviting squares. To the south is Praza das Praterías (Silversmiths' Square), with the *Fuente de los Caballos* (1829) at its centre. The cathedral's south façade, up the steps, is an original, if

weathered, Romanesque masterpiece. Facing it from the lower side of the square is the ornamental 18th-century *Casa do Cabildo*, a residence for cathedral clergy.

Following the cathedral walls you enter Praza da Quintana. Here is the cathedral's *Puerta Santa* (Holy Door), opened only in holy years when the Feast of Santiago (25 July) falls on a Sunday. Across the plaza is the long, stark wall of the *Mosteiro de San Paio de Antealtares*, founded by Alfonso II for Benedictine monks to look after St James' relics, and converted to a nunnery in 1499. Climbing the steps at the top of the plaza you'll find the entrance to the convent, above which stands the beatific figure of the 10th-century Galician child saint San Paio, his throat being slashed in reference to his martyrdom in Córdoba. Inside the convent is a **sacred art museum** (Via Sacra 5; admission €1.50; 11 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Apr-Dec), containing the original altar raised over the Santiago relics.

Keep following the cathedral walls northwards to reach Praza da Inmaculada. Rising up on the far side is the huge Benedictine *Mosteiro de San Martiño Pinario*. The classical façade hides two 17th-century cloisters which are normally closed, except in the summer when the monastery opens as lodgings for tourists and pilgrims (see p546). The monastery's elaborate baroque church (€ 981 58 30 08; admission €2; 11 10am-2pm & 4-6pm Tue-Sun) can be visited through its entrance on Praza de San Martiño Pinario. The visit incorporates a museum with the beautifully carved Renaissance choir stalls from the cathedral.

Other Attractions

Museums worth seeking out include the *Museo das Peregrinacións* (€ 981 58 15 58; Rúa de San Miguel 4; admission free; 11 10am-8pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm & 5-8pm Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm Sun), devoted to the Camino de Santiago phenomenon over the centuries; and the *Museo Granell* (€ 981 57

21 24; www.fundacion-granell.org; Praza del Tournal; admission €2; 11 11am-2pm & 4-9pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 11am-2pm Sun Oct-May, 11am-9pm Wed-Mon Jun-Sep) with an impressive collection of surrealist art based on the work of Galicia's Eugenio Granell.

Northeast of the old town, the former Convento de San Domingos de Bonaval houses the **Museo do Pobo Galego** (Museum of the Galician People; € 981 58 36 20; Rúa San Domingos de Bonaval; admission free; 11 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun), with exhibits on Galician life and arts, from the fishing industry to music and traditional costumes. The monastery's Gothic church is part of the visit, but the most singular feature of all is the triple spiral staircase. Facing the museum, the **Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea** (€ 981 54 66 19; admission free; 11 11am-8pm Tue-Sun) hosts exhibitions of modern art.

About 1km south of the old town along Rúa do Patio de Madres stands, precariously (it suffers a pronounced tilt), the Romanesque *Colexiata de Santa Maria do Sar* (€ 981 56 28 91; admission €1; 11 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat). Part of the beautiful cloister can still be admired and there's a small museum, mainly of Romanesque sculpture.

WALKING TOUR

Any tour of Santiago must begin with the *Catedral del Apóstolo* (1; p541), and many hours can be devoted to this alone. Exit onto Praza do Obradoiro (2; opposite) and proceed south to Praza de Fonseca to look into the *Colexio de Fonseca* (3; € 981 56 31 00; admission free; 11 11am-2pm & 5-8.30pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun), the original seat of Santiago's university (founded in 1495), with a beautiful courtyard, university library and exhibition gallery. Loop back northwards to Praza das Praterías (4; opposite) and Praza da Quintana (5; opposite) at the rear of the cathedral, and turn right onto Rúa de San Paio, along which you'll find a few inviting cafés and bars. At the end of the street, go right, down Rúa de Conga, then left along Rúa Nova with its quaint stone-pillared arcades, stopping to admire the *Igrexa de Santa María Salomé* (6). At the end of Rúa Nova turn right into Praza do Tournal, where there may be a concert going on. If not, pop into the surreal *Museo Granell* (7; opposite). A short distance down Rúa dos Bautizados, exit the old town into the greenery of the *Carballeira de Santa Susana* (8) where you can enjoy great views back across town to the cathedral.

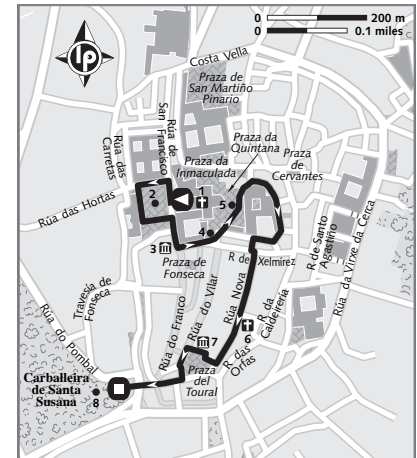
WALK FACTS

Start Cathedral

Finish Carballeira de Santa Susana

Distance 2km

Duration one to two hours



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

July is a fine month to be in Santiago. The Feast of Saint James (Día de Santiago) is on 25 July and is simultaneously Galicia's 'national' day. The night before, Praza do Obradoiro comes alight with the *fogo do Apóstolo*, a spectacular fireworks display that culminates in the incineration of a mock façade erected in front of the cathedral.

SLEEPING

Santiago is bursting with accommodation. In the old town, the number of *hospedaje* (hostelries), *casa de huéspedes* (guesthouses), *habitaciones* (rooms) and *camas* (beds) signs is reassuring for budget travellers, and a growing number of tastefully modernised old buildings provide attractive midrange accommodation. But even so, your first choices may fill up in July or August, so it's wise to book ahead.

Budget

Pensión Forest (€ 981 57 08 11; Rúa de Abril Ares 7; s/d €17/27) A good option, especially if you get a top-floor double (though outer rooms are best avoided on rowdy weekends), the Forest is run

THE BOTAFUMEIRO

Santiago's singular censer, the *botafumeiro* (meaning loosely 'smoke spitter'), dates from the 13th century, weighs 53kg, reaches a speed of 68km/h, misses hitting the north and south transept vaults by only 51cm while reaching an angle of 82°, swings a minimum of 25 days per year, fell in 1499 and 1622 (to the horror of those below) and is a perfect, gigantic pendulum conceived three centuries before pendulum physics was worked out. To see it best, be sure to stand in the north or south transept. When not in action, the Botafumeiro is kept in the cathedral library, part of the Museo da Catedral (p543).

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Costa Vella (☎ 981 56 95 30; www.costa.vella.com; Rúa da Porta da Pena 17; s €51, d €71-86; a) A particularly pleasing small hotel conversion on the northern edge of the old town; many of the good-sized, thoughtfully designed rooms have *galerías* (glassed-in balconies), and excellent breakfasts are served in the café and lovely garden.

by a friendly family who have lived in London. The exterior rooms have *galerías* (glassed-in balconies) but share bathrooms.

Hostal Suso (☎ 981 58 66 11; Rúa do Vilar 65; s/d €20/39) In the heart of the old town, this newly renovated guesthouse has extremely attractive, good-sized rooms with new wooden furnishings and great firm beds.

Hostal Pazo de Agra (☎ 981 58 35 17; pazodeagra@yahoo.es; Rúa da Caldeirera 37; s/d €26/36) This family-run lodging is in a stately old house near the university. Rooms are large, with balconies. Inquire at nearby *Restaurante Zingara*.

Hostal Seminario Mayor (☎ 981 58 30 09; www.viaje.satlantico.com in Spanish; Praza da Inmaculada 5; s/d €30/47; h Jul-Sep) Rooms are basic, but this *hostal* offers the rare experience of staying inside a Benedictine monastery. With 126 rooms, it's a good bet when everywhere else is full.

Hostal Alameda (☎ 981 58 81 00; www.alameda32.com in Spanish; Rúa de San Clemente 32; s/d €31/49, with shared bathroom €19/34) This relaxed lodging has a great position on the edge of the old town, just below the Carballeira de Santa Susana park. Rooms are plain but comfortable enough, and there's a car park right outside.

Midrange

Hostal Libredón (☎ 981 57 65 20; www.libredonbarbantes.com; Praza de Fonseca 5; s €43-54, d €65) The Libredón has small but bright, up-to-date rooms, and a great location on a lively little square just south of the cathedral. Most rooms come with balconies.

Hostal Barbantes (www.libredonbarbantes.com; Rúa do Franco 3; s €43-54, d €65) Across the square from the Libredón and under the same management with very similar rooms. Reception is in the Libredón.

Pensión Campanas de San Juan (☎ 981 55 27 37; www.campanasdesanjuan.com; Rúa Campanas de San Juan 6; s/d €50/66) A charming and friendly new little place just off Praza da Inmaculada, with stone

walls, wrought-iron bedsteads and tasteful modern art and décor.

Hotel Tránsito dos Gramáticos (☎ 981 57 26 40; www.transitodosgramaticos.com in Spanish; Rúa Tránsito dos Gramáticos 1; s/d €54/65) This attractive hotel graces pleasant Praza Mazarelos, with good-sized, very comfortable rooms featuring exposed stonework and (except one) exterior windows. There's a good innovative restaurant here too.

Hotel Airas Nunes (☎ 902 40 58 58; www.pousadas.decompostela.com; Rúa do Vilar 17; s/d €80/91; j) The 10 rooms sport ancient stone walls and cosy modern comforts, on one of Santiago's most atmospheric streets.

Hotel Virxe da Cerca (☎ 902 40 58 58; www.pousadas.decompostela.com; Rúa da Virxe da Cerca 27; s/d €112/123; a i) Backed by tranquil gardens, this large, elegant hotel, with ample, stylish rooms, began life in the 18th century as a Jesuit residence.

Also recommended:

Hostal Alfonso (☎ 981 58 56 85; www.hostalalfonso.com; Rúa do Pombal 40; s/d incl breakfast €43/60; j) Some of the seven cosy, comfortable rooms have great views across town to the cathedral.

Hotel Entrecercas (☎ 981 57 11 51; Rúa Entrecercas 11; s/d incl breakfast €45/65; p i) A charming small hotel occupying a renovated 600-year-old mansion.

Hotel Real (☎ 981 56 92 90; www.hotelreal.com; Rúa da Caldeirera 49; s/d €70/75) Discounts for two-night stays.

Top End

Hotel Rua Villar (☎ 981 51 98 58; www.hotelruavillar.com in Spanish; Rúa do Vilar 8-10; s/d incl breakfast €96/161; a i) A luxuriously kitted-out adaptation of an 18th-century mansion in the heart of town – great skylight in the lobby, too!

San Francisco Hotel Monumento (☎ 981 58 16 34; www.sanfranciscohm.com; Campiello San Francisco 3; s/d €105/134; p a i s) Superb conversion of a 16th-century cathedral/monastery, with all modern comforts including indoor pool and private museum.

Parador Hostal dos Reis Católicos (☎ 981 58 22 00; www.parador.es; Praza do Obradoiro 1; s/d €171/214; p a i) This building is one of Santiago's prime monuments. In keeping with its exalted past, guests pay exalted prices – but it's a magnificent place to stay, crimson-draped four-posters and all!

EATING

There are countless places to eat to suit all pockets. Don't leave without trying a *tarta de Santiago*, an almond-based cake with a

sword-cum-cross emblem etched from the top layer of powdered sugar.

Rúa do Franco and parallel Rúa da Raíña, south of the cathedral, are packed with restaurants displaying boatloads of live seafood. Prime time is around 9pm.

A Taberna do Bispo (☎ 981 58 60 45; Rúa do Franco 37B; tapas €1-6; h closed Mon) Tantalising tapas are arrayed along the bar's length, and you can order all sorts of goodies like *montaditos* (small open sandwiches) of *solomillo* (pork sirloin) with bacon, cheese and dates.

A Despensa de Troia (☎ 981 58 19 09; Rúa da Troia 9; tabla for 1/2 €3/6) This little wine bar is a delightful spot to enjoy a *tabla* (board) of sausage/meats or cheese accompanied by a Ribeiro wine.

Hotel Costa Vella (☎ 981 56 95 30; Rúa da Porta da Pena 17; breakfast €4-5; h 8am-11pm) The lovely leafy walled garden here, with fountain, is a divine spot for a tranquil breakfast, with *tetilla* cheese and honey if you like.

O Gato Negro (☎ 981 58 31 05; Rúa da Raíña; raciones €3-9) Order plates of seafood, ham, cheese or peppers and down them with a bottle of local

wine at one of the five tables (if you can get one) in this tiny, stone-floored, old-town haunt.

O Triángulo Das Verduras (☎ 981 57 51 81; Praciña das Peñas 2; menú €11.50; h 1.30-3.30pm & 9-11.30pm, closed Mon evening & Sun; ✓) These folks prepare some good vegetarian dishes using organic ingredients.

Restaurante Sobrinos del Padre (☎ 981 58 35 66; Rúa da Fonte de San Miguel 7) Octopus rules at this no-frills bar-cum-eatery: a *ración of pulpo a la gallega* goes for €8.60.

Restaurante Ó 42 (☎ 981 57 06 65; Rúa do Franco 42; mains €7-16) Of the many eateries along Franco, *Restaurante Ó 42* is one of the best choices for traditional Galician seafood and meat in an agreeable setting – either in the stone-walled front bar or the bright *comedor* (dining room).

La Bodegailla de San Roque (☎ 981 56 43 79; Rúa de San Roque 13; mains €8-13) Northeast of the old town, this busy two-storey eatery serves an eclectic range of excellent dishes including cheeses, meats, salads, pâtés and desserts. We recommend, among other things, the *boliños*

GALICIAN FOOD FARE

When stomachs grumble in Galicia, thoughts turn to seafood. Galician seafood is plentiful, fresh, and may well be the best you have ever tasted. The region's signature dish is *pulpo a la gallega*, tender pieces of octopus sprinkled with olive oil and paprika (*pulpo á feira* has chunks of potato added). Mollusc mavens will enjoy the variety of *ameixas* (clams) and *mexillóns* (mussels). Special shellfish of the region include *vieiras* and *zamburiñas* (types of scallop), *berberechos* (cockles), *navajas* (razor clams) and the tiny, much-prized goose barnacles known as *percebes*, which bear a curious resemblance to fingernails. Other delicacies include various crabs, from little *necoras* to the great big *buey del mar* – the 'ox of the sea'. Also keep an eye open for the *bogavante* or *lubrigante*, a large, lobster-like creature with two enormous claws.

If you prefer seafood that swims, sample *xoubiñas* – sardines, tastiest when grilled – or *caldeirada*, a hotpot of potato and fish. *Marraxo*, a sort of shark generally served *a la plancha* (hotplate-grilled), is surprisingly tasty. On many menus you can choose between three ways of having your fish prepared: *a la plancha*, *a la gallega* (cooked in chunks with paprika-laced olive oil) or *a la romana* (fried in batter). Always a good bet are *robaliza/lubina/robalo* (sea bass) and *peixe sapo/rape* (monkfish/anglerfish).

If you just want to cleanse your palate before the next sea feast, order a hearty bowl of *caldo gallego* (broth with cabbage or turnip, potato and usually a bit of meat) or a plate of *lacón con grelos* (boiled pork shoulder, potatoes and greens). To spice things up a bit, bite into some *pimientos de Padrón* (small green peppers fried with lots of garlic).

Since the 13th century pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago have looked forward to the *empanadas* of Galicia. Something like pasties, they're usually filled with seafood.

Add to all this some of the best tortillas and meat in Spain and flavourful local cheeses including the creamy *queso de tetilla* ('nipple cheese', named for its breastlike shape) and you will definitely enjoy eating here. Galicia produces some fine wines, too. The Ribeiro wines, mostly from around Ribadavia, include a clean, crisp white and a decent red. For a robust white, the Condado label from the lower Rio Miño is recommended, while the fruity white Albariño from around Cambados is considered the prince of Galician tipples.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Casa Marcelo (☎ 981 55 85 80; Rúa das Hor-tas 1; set menu €38; 1 Wed-Sat) Eating is an occasion at this mod-rustic gourmet dining den just down the hill from Praza do Obradoiro. A different five-course creative feast is prepared daily, with specialties like cockles with mango and pepper, and with the kitchen in full view.

de tenreira en prebe de espinacas (meatballs in spinach sauce; €6.60).

Other recommendations:

Casa Manolo (☎ 981 58 29 50; Praza de Cervantes; set menu €6.80; 1 closed Sun night) The cheap, filling, three-course *menu* offers wide choice and pulls the crowds. **Restaurante Casa Camilo** (☎ 981 58 45 93; Rúa da Raíña 24; mains €9-14) Reliable purveyor of Uncomplicated Galician seafood, fish and meat, with a popular *terrace* (terrace).

Restaurante Don Gaiferos (☎ 981 58 38 94; Rúa Nova 23; mains €15-25; 1 closed Sun & Mon evenings) Great seafood and steaks amid stone arches and subtle lighting.

DRINKING

The cafés on Praza da Quintana and Rúa do Vilar have the prime people-watching locations in town.

Santiago's liveliest central bars lie in a sort of arc east of Praza da Quintana. From A Casa das Crechas (right), Rúa de San Paio de Antealtares runs southeast to Praza de San Paio, where half a dozen bars form a single boisterous entity, with varied good music playing from around 10pm till the early hours.

Borriquita de Belém (Rúa de San Paio 22) Just south of Praza de San Paio, this is a particularly inviting little jazz club serving *mojitos*.

Modus Vivendi (Praza de Feixoo 1; 1 7pm-4am) At the bottom of the street is an atmospheric, wood-paneled pub in the stables of an 18th-century mansion, attracting all types with wide-ranging music and occasional live bands.

North of the cathedral, the multi-level **Café Atlántico** (☎ 981 57 73 96; Rúa da Fonte de San Miguel 9; 1 from 9pm) pulls in a hip, attractive 20s set, with music from Cajun blues to Spanish indie rock, while dimly lit **Bar-Tolo** (Rúa da Fonte de San Miguel 8; 1 from 7.30pm) cultivates a punk attitude with a teens/early 20s crowd. Just down the street is **hs** (☎ 629 87 60 17; Rúa da Troia; 1 from 10.30pm Mon-Sat), a highly spirited gay club.

There are several other good bars in and around the old city:

Momo (☎ 981 56 55 80; Rúa da Virxe da Cerca 23; 1 7pm-4am) Has a wonderful big garden area open in warmer weather with views over parks and monasteries, plus two bars, pool and football tables and rock music. **A Reixa** (☎ 981 56 07 80; Rúa Tras de Salomé 3) A popular, dark, stone-walled, rock den, with a heavy '60s influence and live music some Wednesdays. **Pub Desván** (☎ 981 57 00 97; Rúa da Conga 7) Another popular classic-rock bar.

ENTERTAINMENT

An energetic programme of cultural events and festivals goes on year-round at a variety of venues. Several listings publications are distributed at tourist offices and around town: you can also check the agenda on www.santiagoturismo.com.

Clubs

The large student population ensures that Santiago rages all through the night from Thursday to Saturday.

Conga 8 (☎ 981 58 34 07; Rúa da Conga 8) Upstairs there's a casual café, downstairs a mirror-ball-enhanced dance floor for salsa enthusiasts.

A lot more late drinking and dancing goes on in the new town. People generally frequent the disco-pubs along Rúa da República Arxentina or rowdy Rúa Nova de Abaixo before hitting one of the evergreen discos such as the cavernous **Discoteca Liberty** (☎ 981 59 91 81; Rúa de Alfredo Brañas 4; minimum €4; 1 from 1am), which gets going around 4am on weekends. From Liberty, people head across the street to the after-hours *rockero* haven **El Buho** (Rúa de Alfredo Brañas 11): you enter through the garage door.

Live Music

Some of the best music can be heard free on Santiago's streets and plazas; groups often perform on Praza da Quintana or Praza do Toural, and you're bound to run into a few busking *gaiteros* (bagpipers) and street combos in your wanderings.

A Casa das Crechas (www.casadascrechas.com in Galician; Via Sacra 3) *The place* in Santiago for Celtic music, with jam sessions (*foliadas*) held Wednesday night in the cellar. Tuesday and Thursday usually see guest musicians of other folk and world-music genres. Music usually starts at 10.30pm. On Friday and Saturday nights DJs work the cellar.

Sala Capitol (☎ 981 57 43 99; www.salacapitol.com in Spanish; Rúa Concepción Arenal 5; admission varies) The Capitol is a major venue for touring bands; check its website for upcoming events.

Dado Dadá (☎ 981 59 15 74; www.dado-dada.com; Rúa de Alfredo Brañas 19; 1 10pm-3.30am Mon-Sat) Jazz fans should head for this Santiago mainstay, featuring jam sessions starting at 11pm Tuesday.

SHOPPING

Santiago's old town is littered with shops selling handicrafts, including the characteristic local jet or jet-and-silver jewellery, which is beautiful and ornate. You'll find plenty of traditional Galician lace here, too. **Sargadelos** (☎ 981 58 19 05; Rúa Nova 16) sells the attractive ceramics made in the Galician village of Sargadelos (near Lugo).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Santiago de Compostela's Lavacolla airport (☎ 981 54 75 00) is 11km east of the city. Ryanair flies daily to/from London Stansted, and Air Berlin flies to/from several German airports. Iberia flies up to six times daily to Madrid, three times to Barcelona and Bilbao, and once each to Amsterdam and Brussels. Air Europa and Spanair also serve Madrid, and Spanair and Vueling offer further direct flights to/from Barcelona.

Bus

From Santiago's bus station, **Castromil** (☎ 902 29 29 00) runs hourly services north to A Coruña (€6.15, one hour) and west to Noia (€2.95, 45 minutes) and Muros (€5.70, two hours), and up to nine times daily south to Pontevedra (€4.95, one hour) and Vigo (€7.25, 1½ hours). Castromil also goes up to 10 times daily to Ourense (€9.20, two hours), and up to five times to Cambados and O Grove (€6, two hours).

ALSA (☎ 902 42 22 42) operates up to six buses daily to Madrid (€38 to €53, seven to nine hours), two or three each to Oviedo (€23 to €35, 5½ to 6½ hours), Salamanca (€22 to €27, 6¼ to 7½ hours), Cáceres and Seville, and one each to Barcelona (€62, 16½ hours) and Porto (€29, 3¼ hours) and Lisbon (€41, 8½ hours) in Portugal. ALSA also travels to Paris, London, Brussels, Amsterdam and Zürich.

Further daily services head for places along the Costa da Morte and Rías Baixas, and destinations to the east such as Lugo, Santander, San Sebastián and Burgos.

Car & Motorcycle

Tolls on the AP9 *autopista* (tollway) are €4.50 to A Coruña (64km) and €3.80 to Pontevedra (57km). Parallel to the AP9, slower and free of cost is the N550. Street parking anywhere near the centre of the city is difficult, but several pay car parks are dotted around the periphery of the old town.

Train

You can travel to/from Madrid (Chamartín station; €42.20) on a daytime Talgo (eight hours) or an overnight *trenhotel* (nine hours).

Trains run almost hourly to A Coruña (from €3.60, one hour), and to Pontevedra and Vigo (€5.45 to €7.40, 1¼ to 1¾ hours). There are six or more trains daily to Ourense (from €6.60, 1½ to two hours) and one to Irún, on the French border, via León, Burgos and San Sebastián.

Santiago is the usual finishing point of rail holidays on El Transcantábrico (see the boxed text, p871).

GETTING AROUND

Santiago de Compostela is walkable, although it's a bit of a hike from the train and bus stations to the centre.

Up to 23 **Empresa Freire** (☎ 981 58 81 11) buses run daily between Lavacolla airport and the bus station (€1.70). About half of them continue to/depart from Rúa do Doutor Teixeira, southwest of Praza de Galicia. Taxis charge around €15.

Bus 6 runs every 20 to 30 minutes from Rúa do Hórreo near the train station to Rúa da Virxe da Cerca on the eastern edge of the old town. Coming from the centre to the train station, it stops on Rúa de Santiago Leon de Caracas. Bus 5 runs every 15 to 30 minutes between Praza de Galicia and the bus station, via Rúa da Virxe da Cerca. Tickets cost €0.85.

A CORUÑA & THE RÍAS ALTAS

Often more intemperate and certainly much less visited than the west-facing coast of Galicia, the northern coast is peppered with pleasant surprises. A Coruña is a lively and attractive port city with decent beaches, and there are many smaller towns and fishing villages to explore – plus some of the most impressive coast in all Spain.

A CORUÑA

pop 252,000

A Coruña (Castilian: La Coruña) is Galicia's wealthiest city and was only recently overtaken in size by Vigo. They say 'No one is a stranger in A Coruña' and this is definitely the region's most outward-looking and urbane city, as you might expect from a port of 2000 years' standing that's also home to the world's second-biggest textile company, Inditex, and Galicia's biggest banks and building companies. Today's A Coruña is largely a creation of the 19th and 20th centuries, but it makes up for the paucity of historic monuments with a thriving and sophisticated cultural and nightlife scene and a superb maritime location. This is a city that repays more time and attention than most travellers give it.

Britain looms large on A Coruña's horizon. In 1588 the ill-fated Spanish Armada weighed anchor here, and the following year Sir Francis Drake tried to occupy the town, but was seen off by María Pita, a heroine whose name lives on in the town's main square. Napoleon's troops occupied A Coruña for the first six months of 1809. Their British opponents were able to 'do a Dunkirk' and evacuate, but their commander, General Sir John Moore, died in the battle of Elviña and was buried here. In the 19th and 20th centuries, A Coruña's port was the gateway through which hundreds of thousands of Galician emigrants left for new lives in the Americas.

Orientation

The train and bus stations are 2km southwest of the city centre. A Coruña gets interesting along a fairly narrow isthmus and the large headland to its east and north. The *ciudad vieja* (old city) huddles in the southeast of the headland, while the Torre de Hércules caps its northern extreme. Most hotels, restaurants and bars are in the newer, predominantly 19th-century part of town on the isthmus, whose northwestern side is lined with sandy beaches, while on its southeast lies the port.

Information

Farmacia Velasco (☎ 981 22 21 34; Calle Real 92;

h 9am-3am) Late-opening pharmacy.

Main post office (Calle Alcalde Manuel Casas)

Municipal tourist office (☎ 981 18 43 44; www.turismocoruna.com; Plaza de María Pita; h 9am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun)

Regional tourist office (☎ 981 22 18 22; Dársena de la Marina; h 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm & 5-7pm Sat, 11am-2pm Sun)

Zalae@.Net (Calle de Zalaeta 7; per hr €1.30; h 10am-2am) Internet access.

Sights & Activities

TORRE DE HÉRCULES

One myth says Hercules built the original lighthouse here after slaying the cruel giant Gerion who kept the local populace in terror. All we *know* is that the Romans built a lighthouse in the 2nd century. It was later used as a fort and restored as a lighthouse in 1791. As you enter the **tower** (☎ 981 22 37 30; admission €2; h 10am-5.45pm Oct-Mar, 10am-6.45pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-8.45pm Jul & Aug), you'll see the excavated remains of the original Roman base. Climb the 234 steps to the top for views of the city and coast. The headland around the tower is dotted with the quirky Galician sculptures of the outdoor **Parque Escultórico**.

To get to the tower take the Paseo Marítimo tram (see p554), or bus 3 from Paseo de la Dársena.

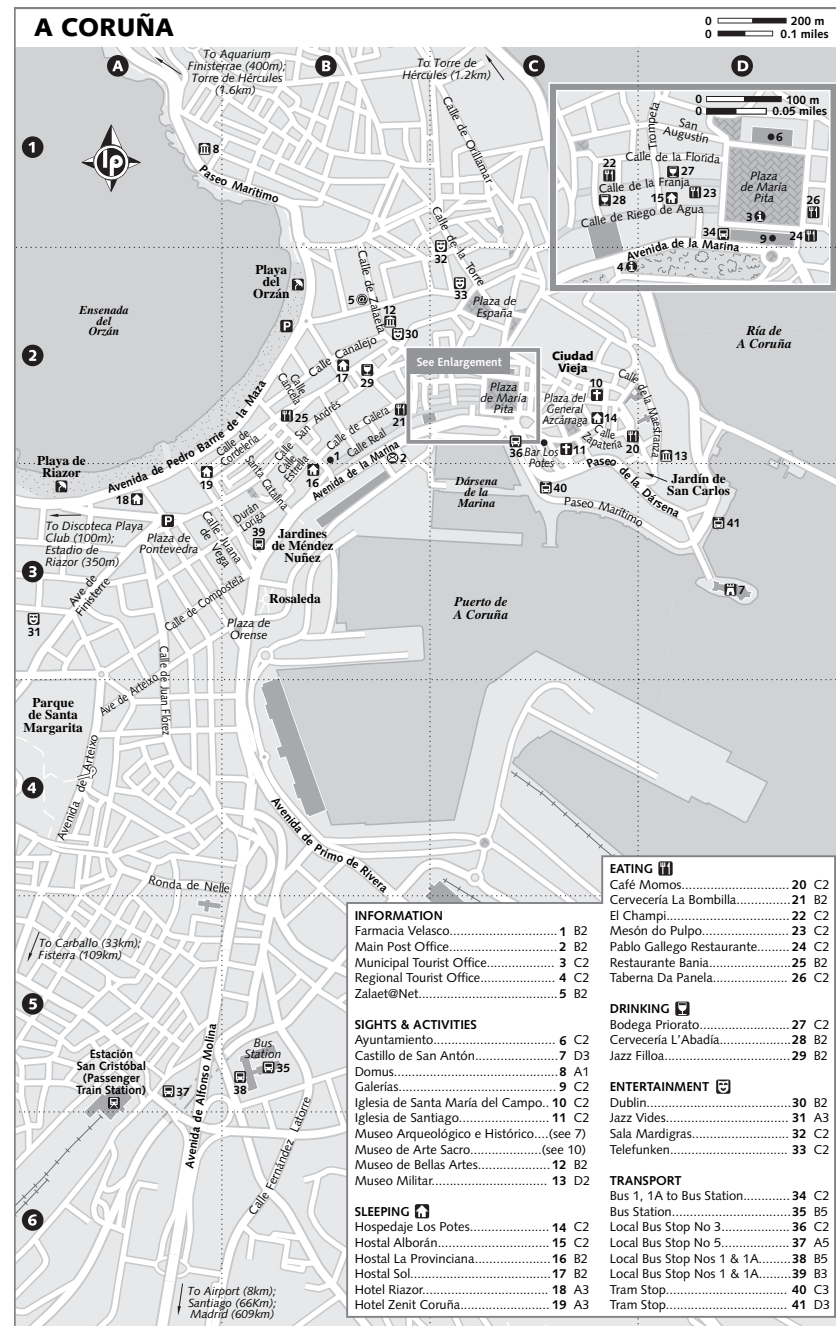
GALERÍAS

A Coruña has been dubbed the 'city of glass'; to find out why, head to the east end of Avenida de la Marina. Multistorey houses sport what could pass as a uniform protective layer of classic late-19th-century Galician *galerías*.

CIUDAD VIEJA

This is a compact zone constituting almost all of A Coruña built before the 19th century. Elegant Plaza de María Pita forms its western boundary, with porticoes on three sides and the flamboyant early-20th-century *ayuntamiento* (town hall) on the fourth.

The Iglesia de Santiago (Calle Parrote; h noon-8pm Mon-Sat), with three Romanesque apses backing onto pretty little Plaza de la Constitución, is the city's oldest church. Dazzling examples of gold and silverwork from the Romanesque-Gothic Iglesia de Santa María del Campo are displayed in the adjacent Museo de Arte Sacro (☎ 981 20 31 86; Puerta de Aires 23; admission free; h 10am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Sep-Jun, 9am-2pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Jul & Aug). A short walk through the labyrinth brings you to the Jardín de San Carlos, where General Sir John Moore lies buried. Across the street, lovers of death and destruction will enjoy the Museo



Militar (☎ 981 20 53 00; Plaza de Carlos I; admission free; 10am-2pm & 4-7pm), with weapons from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

MUSEUMS

Outside the old town walls and keeping a watch over the port, the 16th-century **Castillo de San Antón** now houses a **Museo Arqueológico e Histórico** (☎ 981 18 98 50; admission €2; 10am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun), with an eclectic collection from Bronze Age helmets to material on the battle of Elviña.

The innovative design of the **Museo de Bellas Artes** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 981 22 37 23; Calle de Zalaeta; admission €2.40, Sat afternoon & Sun free; 10am-8pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm & 4.30-8pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) manages to salvage something of the atmosphere of the convent that once stood on the site. In addition to works by Rubens and Goya, it holds a representative collection of 16th- to 20th-century Spanish and European paintings.

Highlights of the **Aquarium Finisterrae** (☎ 981 18 98 42; admission €10; Paseo Marítimo; 10am-9pm Jul & Aug, 10am-7pm or 8pm Sep-Jun), on the seashore not far from the Torre de Hércules, are its seal colony and the underwater Nautilus room surrounded by sharks, rays and 50 other fish species. Along the same seafloor, in an avant-garde Japanese-designed building, is **Domus** (☎ 981 18 98 40; Calle de Santa Teresa 1; admission €2; 10am-7pm Sep-Jun, 11am-9pm Jul & Aug), an interactive museum of the human body – entertaining even for non-Spanish speakers.

BEACHES

A Coruña's city beach is a glorious protected sweep of sand 1.4km long, named Playa del Orzán at its east end and Playa de Riazor at the west – and pretty busy in summer. More beaches are strung along the 30km of coast stretching west to Malpica de Bergantiños.

Sleeping

Hospedaje Los Potes (☎ 981 20 52 19; Calle Zapatería 15; s/d €25/40) One of the few options in the old town, this has large rooms with wood floors and *galerías*. Inquire at Bar Los Potes, three blocks west.

Hostal Alborán (☎ 981 22 65 79; www.hostalalboran.com in Spanish; Calle de Riego de Agua 14; s €24-26, d €37-46) The best-located budget bet, slightly faded Alborán is steps from Plaza de María Pita.

Hostal La Provinciana (☎ 981 22 04 00; www.la-provinciana.net in Spanish; Rúa Nueva 9; s/d €35/47; 10am-7pm) La Provinciana is a homely, well-kept place

with good-sized rooms sporting old-fashioned polished furniture.

Hostal Sol (☎ 981 21 03 62; www.hotelcsolcoruna.com; Calle del Sol 10; s €47-80, d €51-91; 10am-7pm) Though officially a *hostal* (budget hotel), the 39-room Sol has the comfort and efficient management of a good midrange hotel. Standard rooms are well sized, with classical furnishings; 'superior' rooms are more stylish. Get an off-street room if you want to sleep through the end-of-week revels outside the bars in the street below.

Hotel Riazor (☎ 981 14 57 10; www.riazorhotel.com; Avenida Barrié de la Maza 29; s/d €63/118; 10am-7pm) Overlooking Riazor beach, this 12-storey hotel has 71 well-equipped rooms. It's popular with business and conference travellers: check for special weekend rates.

Hotel Zenit Coruña (☎ 981 21 84 84; www.zenit-hotels.com; Calle Comandante Fontanes 19; r €58-150; 10am-7pm) Stylishly minimalist in design, the Zenit reserves five of its seven floors for nonsmokers. All rooms have big exterior windows, glass washbasins and elegant anti-humidity wallpaper. The hotel's La Marola restaurant serves up creative Galician fare, and it's all just a block from Orzán beach. Rates depend on dates and demand: call or check the website.

Eating

Plaza de María Pita is surrounded by restaurants and tapas bars all sporting uniform designer kiosks. The narrow lanes west of Plaza de María Pita, especially Calle de la Franja, have many further options.

Cervecería La Bombilla (Calle de Galera 7; tapas €0.80, raciones €4-6) The 'Light Bulb', an unpretentious corner locale popular with students, concentrates on doing the basics – ham, cheese, tortilla – well, and at retro prices: a slab of fresh tortilla and a cold beer will get you change from €2.

El Champi (☎ 981 22 70 03; Calle de la Franja 50; tapas €1-1.50) Don't miss its signature chomp – a little shrimp on a big sautéed mushroom. You can also try *ortiguillas* (sea anemones) here.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Café Momos (☎ 981 21 44 53; Calle Santo Domingo 16; raciones €5.50-12.50; 10am-midnight Mon-Fri) In the old city, quirky, witch-themed Café Momos attracts all types to its dozen tables for its fabulous tortillas and other tasty creations.

Restaurante Bania (☎ 981 22 13 01; Calle de Cordelera 7; mains €5.50-8.50; 10am-7pm closed Mon night & Sun; 10am-7pm) Tofu escalopes, natural juices and all kinds of salads are a few of the tasty items offered by this neat, artistic vegetarian eatery.

Mesón do Pulpo (☎ 981 20 24 44; Calle de la Franja 9; half-ración/ración €6/9.50; 10am-7pm closed Sun) Go for the octopus; as the name suggests, classically prepared with paprika, rock salt and olive oil.

Taberna Da Penela (☎ 981 20 92 00; Plaza de María Pita 12; mains €9-16; 10am-7pm closed Mon) Highly popular bistrolike spot on the main plaza. The short but good menu focuses on fish, seafood and meat.

Pablo Gallego Restaurante (☎ 981 20 88 88; Plaza de María Pita 11; mains €11-34; 10am-7pm closed Sun) Classy, stone-walled joint in a corner of the plaza, preparing 21st-century updates on traditional Galician ingredients – you might start with the scallops, crabs and asparagus, and follow them with steamed sea bass with seaweed and sea urchins.

Drinking

The cafés on Plaza de María Pita are unbeatable for people-watching. The streets to the southwest known as the Zona de los Vinos, including Calle de la Franja, Calle Barrera and Calle de Galera, have many popular bars for evening drinks and tapas, drawing every type of customer.

Dozens of pubs on Calle del Sol, Calle Canalejo, Calle del Orzán and other streets behind Playa del Orzán party on from around midnight till 3am or 4am at the weekend.

Cervecería L'Abadía (☎ 981 22 97 02; Calle de Franja 49; 10am-7pm closed Mon) This wood-trimmed beer hall has Estrella de Galicia on tap.

Bodega Priorato (Calle de la Franja 16) Sawdust and peanut shells litter the floor of A Coruña's oldest bodega (wine cellar), where wine is poured by the *porrón* (jug with a long, thin spout through which you pour wine into your mouth).

Jazz Filloa (Calle del Orzán 31; 10pm-3am) Jazz connoisseurs will appreciate the great musical selection at this cavernous hang-out. There's live music about once a week.

Entertainment

Sala Mardigras (☎ 981 20 38 77; www.salamardigras.com in Spanish; Travesía de la Torre 8; admission varies; 10pm-10pm Thu-Sat) This dark little club can get pretty crowded, especially when touring bands play.

Dublin (☎ 981 20 32 74; Calle Panaderas 50) Irish pub staging Galician folk nights most Tuesdays. Music starts around 10pm.

Jazz Vides (☎ 981 27 96 10; www.jazzvides.com in Spanish; Calle José Luis Pérez Cepeda 23; admission varies; 10pm-10pm Thu-Sat) Varied live music, from jazz and folk to acid-jazz and funky, happens at this wine bar-cum-nightclub.

Telefunken (www.housecafe music.com in Spanish; Calle Alcalde Folla Yordi 8; 10pm-midnight-4am Thu-Sat) Cool club for house lovers.

Discoteca Playa Club (☎ 981 25 00 63; www.playaclub.net in Spanish; Playa de Riazor; admission €6.50; 10pm-midnight Fri & Sat) As the pubs close, the discos start to fill. Ever-popular Playa Club, with views over the bay, plays plenty of alternative pop, soul-jazz, funk and electronica. There are live bands at least once a week.

Deportivo La Coruña (☎ 981 22 94 10; www.canal-deportivo.com in Spanish; Estadio de Riazor, Calle de Manuel Murguía) A Coruña is justly proud of its football team, which mixes it with Europe's best. Check the website for ticket details.

Getting There & Away

AIR

From A Coruña's **Alvedro airport** (☎ 981 18 72 00), Iberia has at least three flights daily to/from Madrid and Barcelona, plus daily direct services to/from London. There are further Madrid and Barcelona flights on Spanair, and daily flights to Lisbon by Portugalía.

BUS

From the bus station (☎ 981 18 43 35; Calle Caballeros 21), **Castromil** (☎ 902 29 29 00) operates services to Santiago de Compostela (€6.15, one hour) at least 16 times daily, and to Pontevedra (€11, two hours) and Vigo (€12.85, 2½ hours) six or more times daily. **Arriva** (☎ 902 27 74 82) heads several times daily to Betanzos (€2, 45 minutes, 22 or more daily), Ferrol (€5.95, one hour), Viveiro (€12.30, three hours), Lugo (€7.65 to €8.40, 1¼ hours) and Ourense (€13.45, 2¼ hours), and also serves the Costa da Morte.

ALSA (☎ 902 42 22 42) runs east to Asturias, Cantabria, the Basque Country and Barcelona, south to Portugal, Extremadura and Andalucía, and to Madrid (€36 to €51, 6½ to 8½ hours, three or more daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The AP9 tollway heading for Santiago de Compostela is the quickest way out of town to the south. Before Betanzos another tollway heads north to Ferrol. The N550 to Santiago is prettier and there's no charge.

TRAIN

Trains head south about hourly to Santiago de Compostela (from €3.60, one hour), Pontevedra (€7.90 to €10.70, two to 2½ hours) and Vigo (€8.90 to €12.05, 2½ to three hours). There are three or more daily trains to Lugo (from €6.05, two hours), Ourense (€17.70 to €20.80, 1¾ to 2¾ hours) and Betanzos (€2.40 to €3, 40 minutes), two to Madrid (Chamartin station; €45, nine or 10 hours), and one or two to Barcelona via Zaragoza.

Getting Around

Twelve buses a day (seven on Saturday, four on Sunday) travel between the bus station and airport (€1.15), 8km south of the centre. A taxi costs around €10.

Local buses 5, 5A and 11 link the train station with central A Coruña; they stop diagonally opposite the station. Buses 1, 1A, 12 and 14 stop outside the bus station en route to the city centre. Rides cost €1.15.

Daily from mid-June to sometime in October, and on weekends the rest of the year, trams (€1) run along Paseo Marítimo from the port area right round the large headland north of the city centre to the beach Playa de Riazor. This service is convenient for reaching the Torre de Hércules and the Aquarium Finisterrae.

RÍAS ALTAS

In many ways the Rías Altas and surrounding countryside east of A Coruña have an edge over the more popular Rías Baixas. They are far less populated and less touristed, retaining a greater natural attraction, and many beaches on this stretch are every bit as good as those to the south. A handful of enticing towns, such as medieval Betanzos and Pontedeume, are accompanied by some of the most dramatic coast in Spain.

Betanzos

pop 13,000 / elevation 38m

Just 24km east of A Coruña, the old part of Betanzos occupies a low hill between Ríos Mendo and Mandeo, which meet here to flow north into Ría de Betanzos. Medieval Betanzos was long a busy port until it was eclipsed by A Coruña. Today its well-preserved old town has a lively eating and drinking scene.

There's a **tourist information office** (☎ 981 77 36 93; Rúa de Emilio Romay 1; 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat) inside the Museo das Mar-

íñas. Banks are on or near the sprawling main square, Praza dos Irmáns García Naveira, with its multistorey houses glassed in by classic *galerías*. Around 50,000 people cram into the square at midnight on 16 August to witness the releasing of an enormous, decorated, paper hot-air balloon from the tower of Santo Domingo church, in the Fiesta de San Roque.

SIGHTS

The original settlement that predated the town stood on what is now Praza da Constitución, which is flanked by the neoclassical Casa do Concello and Romanesque/Gothic Igrexa de Santiago. More interesting is the small Praza de Fernán Pérez de Andrade, with the Gothic churches of Santa María do Azougue and San Francisco (11.9.30am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm). The latter is filled with elaborate noble tombs, above all the fabulously carved stone tomb of Fernán Pérez de Andrade 'O Boo' (The Good), the 14th-century local potentate who had all three of these Gothic churches built. His sepulchre is supported by the family emblems in stone – a bear and a wild boar.

The Museo das Mariñas (admission €1.20; 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1pm Sat), located in the old Santo Domingo monastery, showcases an intriguing assortment of curios, including traditional Galician costumes and some of the district's rich medieval funerary sculpture.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Garelos (☎ 981 77 59 30; www.hotelgarelos.com; Calle Alfonso IX 8; s/d incl breakfast €64/86; p a i), The best hotel for miles around is the sparkling-new Hotel Garelos close to Praza dos Irmáns García Naveira. The spick-and-span rooms are endowed with parquet floors, marble bathrooms and the lovely local watercolours of artist Manuel Gandullo. Second choice is the unremarkable Hotel Los Angeles (☎ 981 77 15 11; Rúa dos Anxeles 11; s/d €47/56).

Culinary life focuses on Travesía do Progreso, a lane off the main square: O Pote and O Rabel are popular watering holes serving tapas (€2 to €2.50) and *bocadillos* (bread rolls with fillings). The parallel lane, Venela do Campo, has more tapas bars, while the cafés under the old stone arches on the main square are popular for breakfast. You can quench your thirst with an Irish or Belgian beer at nearby Cervezeria Zoki (Praza Domingo Etcheverría).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Up to 33 daily Arriva buses to/from A Coruña (€2, 45 minutes) operate from Praza dos Irmáns García Naveira. Four Arriva buses head daily to Viveiro, and six each to Lugo and Ferrol.

Betanzos Cidade train station is northwest of the old town, across Río Mendo. Three trains go daily to Ferrol and A Coruña (both €2.40 to €3, 40 minutes).

Pontedeume

pop 4500

Founded in 1270, this hillside feudal bastion is another appealing stop with a sweep of sandy beach, Praia de Cabanas, just across the bridge that carries the main road over the Eume estuary. Rúa Real, the narrow, porticoed street leading up from the roundabout at the south end of the bridge, climbs past a cheerful little square to the 18th-century Iglesia de Santiago. Down near the waterfront, opposite the market, rises the Torreón dos Andrade, the keep of what was once the palace-castle of the local feudal lords, the Andrades. It houses a **tourist office** (☎ 981 43 02 70; 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2.30pm Sat, 11am-2pm Sun), where you can obtain information on walks in the lovely 91-sq-km Parque Natural Fragas do Eume, which begins a few kilometres up the Eume valley. The park preserves Galicia's last great Atlantic coastal forest and the romantic ruins of the 10th-century Mosteiro de Caaveiro.

Hostal Allegue (☎ 981 43 00 35; Rúa Chafaris 1; r €39) is the most comfortable of three similar restaurant/guesthouses around Plaza del Convento.

Rúa Real is lined with taverns and eateries. At **Taberna Tostaky** (☎ 981 43 44 45; Rúa Real 34; raciones €7-10; 11 closed Sun night & Mon) a Frenchman prepares dishes such as vegetarian lasagne and salads of local Eume cheese and *jamón serrano* (Serrano ham).

Cedeira

pop 7000

The biggest town on the Rías Altas is the naval port of Ferrol, 17km north of Pontedeume. Ferrol is the western terminus of the FEVE railway from the Basque Country and was the birthplace of General Franco, but it has little to detain the visitor and you might as well carry on 38km north to Cedeira, on the pretty Ría de Cedeira. En route, after about 16km, is Valdoviño, with the beautiful Praia Frouxeira. Just beyond Valdoviño, Praia de Pantín hosts an international surfing competition in early September.

Cedeira's older nucleus fronts the west bank of Río Condomiñas with traditional *galerías*, while across two parallel bridges on the modern side of town is the pleasant Praia da Magdalena. Around the headland to the south is the more appealing Praia de Vilarrube, a protected dunes/wetlands area.

Cedeira's **tourist office** (☎ 981 48 21 87; Calle Ezequiel López 17; 10.30am-1.30pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-2pm Sat) is in the old town.

For a nice hour or two's stroll, walk seaward along the waterfront to the fishing port, climb up beside the old fort above it and then walk out onto the headland overlooking the mouth of Ría de Cedeira. The rocky coast around here produces rich harvests of *percebes* (goose barnacles), which is a much-coveted (and expensive) seafood delicacy.

SLEEPING & EATING

You should phone ahead in August for bookings. The town is full of bars and cafés, especially around the river mouth.

Pensión Brisa (☎ 981 48 10 54; Arriba da Ponte 19; s/d €26/36) On the west bank of the river, this affably managed place offers basic rooms of variable size and ventilation, but all are in decent shape.

Pensión Chelsea (☎ 981 48 23 40; Praza Sagrado Corazón 9; d €43) This central apartment-block *pensión* (small private hotel) isn't in the first flush of youth but provides cheerful rooms and a friendly welcome.

Apartamentos A Revolta (☎ 650 606500; apartamentosarevolta@yahoo.es; Paseo Marítimo; apt for 2/4 €60/85) About 500m along the beach from the centre, these good, modern apartments, open year-round, all enjoy *ría* views.

Taberna do Puntal (☎ 981 48 05 32; tortillas €4-5; 11 closed Tue) Along the road towards Vilarrube beach, this lively tavern serves exquisitely gooey tortillas and a superior selection of Ribeiro wines.

Mesón Muíño Kilowatio (☎ 981 48 26 90; Rúa Maríneiro 12; raciones €7-15) Stop by this popular locale a few doors from Café A Marina for a large portion of *marraxo* (a type of shark) and a cold beer.

Restaurante A Revolta (☎ 981 48 07 64; Paseo Marítimo; raciones €8-15) Down by the beach, Restaurante A Revolta is a good place to sample *percebes* (ración €14) or whatever else was netted earlier in the day. You can sit in the stone-walled, check-cloth bar or the more formal restaurant area.

Restaurante Brisa (☎ 981 48 20 85; Rúa Mariñeiro 8; mains €8-18; 🍴 lunch daily, dinner Thu-Sun) One of the few restaurants (as opposed to bars with food) in the riverfront/central area. The speciality octopus and clams and *merluza a la cazuela* (hake casserole) are both good bets.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

By bus from the south, you'll need to change in Ferrol, from where Rialsa runs five or more buses daily (€2.65, 45 minutes). Arriva has three or four daily buses to Cariño (€2.75, 50 minutes).

Serra da Capelada

North of Cedeira it only gets better. On the road to San Andrés de Teixido you exchange the ever-changing horizons of the *rías* for thick woodlands, and after San Andrés the winding road is dotted with spectacular *miradores* (lookouts) over some of the sheerest coast in Europe. Anyone with a vehicle should come this way just for the views. Wild horses still mingle here with long-horned cattle and long-armed windmills. The nearest Sunday to 1 July is the annual date for the *rapa das bestas*, the festive round-up and breaking in of the free-spirited horses.

SAN ANDRÉS DE TEIXIDO & GARITA HERBEIRA

Tiny San Andrés, 12km northeast of Cedeira, is renowned as a sanctuary of relics of St Andrew. Spaniards flock here by the busload and fill bottles with spring water from the *Fonte do Santo*. Six kilometres beyond San Andrés is the spectacular Garita Herbeira *mirador*, 600m above sea level.

CABO ORTEGAL

Another 20km northeast is Cabo Ortegal, the mother of Spanish capes. Great stone shafts drop sheer into the ocean from such a height that the waves crashing onto the rocks below seem pitifully – and deceptively – benign. The cape, which marks the meeting of the Atlantic Ocean and Bay of Biscay, is 4km beyond the workaday town of Cariño. Buses run to Cariño from Ferrol, Cedeira and Ortigueira, and there are three *hostales*.

Cariño to Viveiro

From Cariño the road roughly follows Ría de Ortigueira southwards to Río Mera. The only town of any consequence is Ortigueira,

a fishing town and the site of a major Celtic music festival held in July (see the boxed text, opposite). Continue northeast to O Barqueiro, a Galician fishing village as you might imagine one, on the Ferrol-Viveiro railway and bus route. White houses with slate-tile roofs cascade down to a small protected port. There's little to do but watch the day's catch come in, but that's the point – this is the real thing. There are three places to stay and eat on the waterfront: **Hostal O Forno** (☎ /fax 981 41 41 24; s/d €35/50) has rooms in excellent, comfy condition, most enjoying harbour views.

For an even quieter base, push north to the hamlet of Porto de Bares, 2km past Vila de Bares, boasting a lovely crescent beach. **Hostal Porto Mar** (☎ 981 41 86 76; Rúa Feliciano Armada 15; s/d €30/40) has good-sized, bright, clean rooms, and **Restaurante La Marina** (☎ 981 41 40 01), above the beach, does superb seafood paellas (€16 to €24 per person, minimum two). Between Vila de Bares and Porto de Bares, a 1.5km side road leads off to the *Punta da Estaca de Bares*, Spain's most northerly point. From the lighthouse, a trail follows the spine of the serpentine outcrop almost to its end.

Viveiro

pop 6000

Behind the grand *Puerta de Carlos V* (the most impressive of Viveiro's three remaining old gates, facing the *Puente de Misericordia* bridge over the Ría de Viveiro) lies a straggle of cobbled lanes and plazas where not too much has changed since the town was rebuilt after a fire in 1540. Directly up the street past *Praza Maior* is the *Iglesia de Santa María do Campo*, displaying Romanesque and Gothic features. Nearby is a bad-taste reproduction of the shrine of Lourdes, while to the north the 14th-century *Iglesia de San Francisco* (🕒 11.30am-1.30pm & 7-8.30pm) features an extraordinary apse with tall, slender stained-glass windows.

A well-stocked **tourist office** (☎ 982 56 08 79; www.viveiro.es; Avenida Ramón Canosa; 🕒 10.45am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat) is opposite the small bus station (north along the waterfront from the *Puerta de Carlos V*).

Hotel Vila (☎ 982 56 13 31; www.hotel-vila.net; Avenida Nicolás Cora Montenegro 57; s/d €38/45; 🍴), about 300m up from the waterfront, is a welcoming place to stay, with comfy rooms, breakfasts available, and helpful, English-speaking hosts. There are *hostales* and a couple of camping

grounds on the beaches outside town, particularly at *Praia de Covas*.

For a good seafood meal, head to **O Muro** (☎ 982 56 08 23; Rúa Margarita Pardo de Cela 28; fish mains €13.50-15; 🍴 closed Mon), with a bar downstairs and dining room upstairs. **Mesón Xoquín** (☎ 982 56 27 56; Rúa Irmáns Vilar Ponte 19; raciones €3.50-12.50) is a great little place for tapas, from mussels or meatballs to eggs and chips with slivers of eel.

Four daily FEVE trains travelling between Ferrol (€5.05, two hours) and Oviedo (€12.85, 4½ hours) stop at Viveiro. Four or five daily buses operate to A Coruña (€12.30, three hours), Ferrol (€7.50, 1½ hours), Lugo (€9, two hours) and (except Sundays) Ribadeo (€4.70, one hour).

Mondoñedo

pop 6000 / elevation 139m

Compared with the natural spectacles of Galicia's northwestern coast, the offerings east of Viveiro cut a poor figure. The main road lies mostly well inland, and most of the beaches pale before their cousins further west and east.

PIPERS & FIDDLERS

Although the sounds and rhythms of Galician music differ noticeably from those of the Celts in Brittany, Ireland and Scotland, there's also much in common between the different traditions. The most readily recognisable Galician instrument is the *gaita* (bagpipe). Summer in Santiago de Compostela is a good time to catch buskers playing traditional Galician tunes, on quite an inventory of instruments. In addition to the standard *gaita*, *bombo* (big drum) and *violin*, look out for the *zanfona*, a string and key instrument vaguely similar to an accordion.

Bagpipe ensembles feature in many Galician festivals and the leading *gaiteros* (bagpipers) are popular heroes. If you get the chance to hear stars such as Carlos Núñez, Xosé Manuel Budiño, Susana Seivane or Mercedes Peón, don't pass it up. Top traditional folk groups, also well worth watching out for, include Milladoiro, Luar Na Lubre and Berrogüetto. Uxia is a powerful female vocalist and interpreter of traditional popular song.

Perhaps the best setting in which to enjoy Galicia's musical heritage is at its myriad summer folk festivals. These summits bring together folk musicians from within the region and far beyond, with groups from Asturias, Brittany, Ireland and even Nova Scotia sharing their roots.

- **Ortigueira International Celtic Music Festival** (☎ 981 40 00 00; www.festivaldeortigueira.com) Rías Altas; second weekend in July.
- **Festival Intercéltico do Morrazo** (☎ 986 31 01 04; www.interceltico.com in Spanish) In Moaña, Ría de Vigo; last weekend in July.
- **Festa da Carballeira** (☎ 981 77 00 11; www.festadacarballeira.com) Zas, Costa de Morte region, 40km northwest of Santiago de Compostela; first weekend in August.
- **Festival Celta de Pardiñas** (☎ 982 37 01 09) Guitiriz, midway between A Coruña and Lugo; first weekend in August.
- **Festival Celta dos Irmandiños** (☎ 981 40 40 06) Moeche, 20km northeast of Ferrol; second-last weekend in August.

By contrast, a detour inland to Mondoñedo is rewarding. Once the seat of a bishopric and, until 1833, a provincial capital within Galicia, the town is surrounded by green hills and its slightly down-at-heel appearance in no way diminishes its interest.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 982 50 71 77; www.emondonedo.com in Spanish; Praza da Catedral 34; 🕒 10.30am-2pm & 4.30-7pm) is just up from the large and impressive **cathedral** (🕒 9am-1pm & 4-8pm), a stylistic mongrel ranging from 13th-century Romanesque to 18th-century baroque. Check out the 15th-century murals in the main nave, displaying St Peter's martyrdom and the slaughter of the innocents. Also fronting the old square is the 18th-century **Palacio Episcopal**. The *Fonte Vella* (Old Fountain), a short walk south, was built in 1548.

Mondoñedo's most unusual place to stay is the **Hospedaxe Seminario** (☎ 982 52 10 00; Praza do Seminario; s/d €21.40/38.52), in the 18th-century Santa Catalina seminary behind the cathedral, where rooms are spacious and comfortable, but this is probably not the place to come if you're in a party mood.

Meson Os Arcos (☎ 982 50 70 12; Rúa de Alfonso VII 6; mains €6-10) specialises in tasty *carnes a la brasa* (barbecued meats).

A few daily buses operate to Lugo, Ribadeo, Viveiro and A Coruña.

Ribadeo

pop 9000

The best thing about this busy little frontier town is its broad *rúa*. The impressive **Ponte dos Santos** crosses the waterway that, becoming Río Eo further inland, marks the regional border with Asturias for 30km south. Ribadeo's tranquil, palm-studded central square, Praza de España, is highlighted by the modernist Torre de los Moreno with a glazed ceramic dome. If you have a little time to spare, head 10km west to Praia As Catedrais, a 1.5km sandy beach with spectacular rock arches.

The centre of Ribadeo is awash with places to stay: **Hotel Mediante** (☎ 982 13 04 53; www.hotelmediante.com; Praza de España 16; s/d €47/60; j) is recommended both for its cosy rooms and its fish and meat grills.

Two daily FEVE trains run along the Asturian coast to/from Oviedo (€9.25, 3½ hours); four run to/from Ferrol (€8.65, three hours). Half a dozen daily buses head to/from Oviedo, Luarca and (except Sunday) Viveiro, and a few to/from Lugo.

COSTA DA MORTE

Legend is that on stormy nights, villagers along the 'Coast of Death' used to put out lamps to lure passing ships to their doom on deadly rocks, and would then reap a harvest of whatever washed ashore. This treacherous coast has certainly seen more than its share of shipwrecks. On sunny days you could be forgiven for thinking the tales of danger are exaggerated, but the idyllic landscape can undergo a rapid transformation when ocean mists blow in. The area remains one of the most intriguing in Galicia, relatively isolated and fairly thinly populated. Every fishing village has its own character and the coast between them rarely fails to be either dramatic or beautiful.

West of A Coruña, the Costa da Morte begins at unassuming Caíón.

Arriva (☎ 902 27 74 82; www.arriva.es in Spanish) runs buses from Santiago de Compostela and A Coruña to many places on the Costa da Morte.

MALPICA DE BERGANTIÑOS

pop 3000

Malpica calls itself 'the town of life on the coast of death', and its bustling centre, with a sweeping, sandy beach on one side and a busy port on the other, is certainly one of the saltier places along this coast. Offshore are the *Illas Sisargas*, where gulls nest.

Hostal JB (☎ 981 72 19 06; Ruedo da Praia 3; s €26-35, d €39-45) has lovely, well-cared-for rooms, some overhanging the beach.

Hostal Panchito (☎ 981 72 03 07; Praza Villar Amigo 5; r €37-46) is upstairs from a busy fishermen's café on the main street. Its good bright rooms all have outside windows.

For seafood, head to the shiny **Casa Antonio** (☎ 981 72 00 04; Plaza Santa Lucia; mains €11-21), in the alley next to Café Panchito, or **O'Burato** (☎ 981 72 00 57; mains €12-15), across the way and overlooking the port. Most people start their meals with a crack of their favourite shellfish.

Four or more daily buses come here from A Coruña (€5.50, one hour), but just one from Santiago de Compostela on Saturday and Sunday.

LAXE, CAMELLE & AROUND

Laxe (population 3000) has a sweeping blue-flag beach, though unfortunately its diminutive historic core is overshadowed by modern buildings. The 15th-century Gothic church of Santa María da Atalaia stands guard over the harbour.

The **Hostal Bahía** (☎ 981 72 82 07; www.bahialaxe.com; Avenida Besugueira 24; s/d €30/40, r with terrace €55), uphill past Santa María da Atalaia, has 22 well-maintained rooms; the more expensive ones have stupendous terraces overlooking the port. Owner Manuel is a mine of information about the best walks and places to go on the Costa da Morte. For fresh fish and seafood, head to the **Casa do Arco** (☎ 981 70 69 04; Rúa Real 1; mains €12-18; h closed Tue) overlooking the bay.

Up to five buses run daily to/from A Coruña (€7.20, 1¼ hours); there's also a bus Monday to Friday from Santiago de Compostela with Aucasa (€6.20).

One lovely two-day, 39km walk, takes you southwest along the coast to Camariñas. Along the way are **Praia de Traba**, a 2km sweep of sand that remains virtually deserted even in mid-August, and the laid-back fishing village of **Camelle**, where **A Molinera** (☎ 981 71 03 28; Rúa Principal 79; r €30) has plain but well-kept rooms. **Café Bar Rotterdam** (mains from €7) by Camelle's port serves delicious fish dishes.

Towards the end of Camelle's pier you'll find the **Museo do Alemán**, a garden of quirky sculpture created by an eccentric, long-time German resident. Locals say the sculptor, known simply as Man, was so devastated by the *Prestige* spill, which splashed his fanciful figures black, that he died shortly afterwards, apparently sapped of the will to live. The museum has been left to fend for itself.

Just west of Camelle is **Arou**, a little-visited fishing village with a couple of pleasant swimming areas. A passable dirt track leads from near Arou towards **Ensenada de Trece**, a quiet beach, and eventually to the Camariñas-Cabo Vilán road. After 10km the track passes the **Cemiterio dos Ingleses** (English Cemetery), the burial ground from an 1890 shipwreck in which 170 British cadets drowned.

CAMARIÑAS

pop 6000

The small fishing port of Camariñas is a place of simple charms: cobblestone lanes wind past cubist houses, and women make the town's traditional *encaixe* (lacework – some of it very pretty) in the streets and at their windows. Several shops specialise in lace, and there's a **Museo do Encaixe** (☎ 981 73 63 40; Praza Insuela; admission €1.20; h 11am-2pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun) by the town hall.

While you're here, take a look at **Cabo Vilán**, an impressive cape with a 25m lighthouse, 5km northwest of the town.

Overall the best bet of half a dozen places to stay is the new **Hotel O Parranda** (☎ 981 70 54 68; www.oparranda.com; Calle Casadillo 1; s/d incl breakfast €25/40; √√), behind the town hall and half a block from the harbour. It has 18 sparkling, all-exterior rooms. Neat, spacious **Restaurant Villa de Oro** (☎ 981 73 63 54; Rúa do Areal 5; mains €6-15), 150m back from the harbour, does good roast lamb as well as seafood.

Up to four buses run daily to/from Santiago de Compostela (€9.30, two hours), some with a change in Baio, and to/from A Coruña (€9.70, two hours), some with a change at Vimianzo.

MUXÍA & AROUND

Getting to/from Camariñas you'll pass through Ponte do Porto, on Río Grande. The coastal road south for Os Muíños (Molinos) passes the pretty hamlet of **Cereixo**, then turns sharp right along a narrow, shaded road. Along this enchanting route, near Leis – which has almost as many *hórreos* (grain stores) as houses –

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Casa de Trillo (☎ 981 72 77 78; www.casade.trillo.com; r incl breakfast €64-80; p i √) For something different, make for the hamlet of Santa Mariña, 1km west of Villarmide (which is 10km south of Muxía). Here the Casa de Trillo provides characterful rooms in a 16th-century noble mansion with a heap of history and lovely gardens.

you'll find one of the most inviting beaches along the Costa da Morte, **Praia do Lago**, looking across the 3km-wide *ría* to Camariñas, with a quiet little river at its south end. **Hostal Playa de Lago** (☎ 981 75 07 93; www.hostalplayadelago.com in Spanish; s/d €33/40; h Easter-Oct), opposite the south end of the beach, is a friendly place with cosy rooms and a seafood restaurant. There are also a couple of camping grounds here.

Muxía itself (population 5000) is nothing special, but you can head out to **Punta da Barca**, which affords good views of the coast. In the baroque **Santuário da Virxe da Barca** are kept the stone hull and sail of the stone boat in which Santiago (St James) supposedly started back for Palestine after preaching in Galicia (this was, of course, before he died in Palestine and his body was returned to Galicia in another stone boat). The rocks around the church are the scene of a popular *romería* (festive pilgrimage) in mid-September. Muxía's **Hostal La Cruz** (☎ 981 74 20 84; Avenida López Abente 44; s/d €41/55) has bright rooms, great views and a restaurant.

Two or three buses travel daily to/from A Coruña to Muxía (€11.20, 2¼ hours), with a change at either Vimianzo or Laxe, and there are two daily from Santiago de Compostela.

FISTERRA & AROUND

Those wandering about the Costa da Morte will want to make it to Galicia's version of Land's End, **Cabo Fisterra** (Castilian: Cabo Finisterre), where Spain stops and the Atlantic begins. Although this is not quite mainland Spain's westernmost point (Cabo de la Nave, 5km north, has that distinction), it's certainly a spectacular spot. It's also the end of the popular 86km Camino de Fisterra variant of the Camino de Santiago (see p98).

From the town of Fisterra (population 3000) it's 3.5km to the cape. On the way out is the 12th-century **Igrexa de Santa María das Areas**, a mix of Romanesque, Gothic and baroque. The

best views of the coast are to be had by climbing up the track, beginning 600m past the church, to Monte Facho and Monte de San Guillermo. The area is laced with myth and superstition, and they say childless couples used to come up here to improve their chances of conception.

Fisterra town has a dozen places to stay. **Hostal Mariquito** (☎ 981 74 00 84; Calle Santa Catalina 24; r €36), just up from the main harbour, has reasonably modern rooms, and the four front ones on the 4th floor enjoy harbour views. Much more charming and comfy is **Hotel Rústico Insula Finisterrae** (☎ 981 71 22 11; www.insulafinisterrae.com in Spanish; A Insua 76; r incl breakfast €72; p i s), a century-old converted farmhouse at the top of the village, with stone walls, crisp white bedding, solid wood furnishings, fantastic views and great breakfasts.

O Centolo (☎ 981 74 04 52; Calle del Puerto; dishes & raciones €10-30; h closed late Dec & Jan) serves up good fresh seafood and fish in a stylish café overlooking the harbour.

Up to six buses daily come from A Coruña (€11.40, two hours) and up to seven from Santiago de Compostela (€10, 2½ hours). Some require a change in Baio or Cée.

TOWARDS THE RÍAS BAIXAS

The southernmost stretch of the Costa da Morte has its moments. From Ézaro, 25km east of Fisterra, a 2.5km side road leads up to a *mirador* with awesome views over the Atlantic.

O Pindo is a cute fishing village set back on a shallow, tranquil bay. Here you'll find the adequate **Hospedaje La Morada** (☎ 981 76 48 70; s/d €20/30), with shiny white quilted bedspreads and a reasonably priced restaurant.

Another 10km south is long, sandy Playa de Carnota – usually not too crowded and fine if the wind isn't up. Carnota town is renowned as home to Galicia's longest *hórreo* – 34.5m long, it was built late in the 18th century.

RÍAS BAIXAS

The four great estuaries of Galicia's south, the Rías Baixas (Castilian: Rías Bajas), are the grandest of all the *rías* that indent the length of the Galician coast and are justifiably well known. There are plenty of beaches and several relatively low-key resorts, and in summer good weather is a better bet here than further north. You may be a little disappointed with the dull, built-up stretches to be found along

every *ría*, and by the traffic and 'House Full' signs in summer, but there are enough pretty villages and expanses of beautiful shore to keep most people happy. Throw in the Illas Cíes, lovely old Pontevedra and bustling Vigo, and you have a tempting travel cocktail.

The following sections start at the inland end of each *ría* and work outwards, but if you have a vehicle an appealing option is simply to follow the coast around from one *ría* to the next: the coastal road runs some 360km from Cée on the Costa da Morte to Tui on the Portuguese border – a straight-line distance of just 110km!

RÍA DE MUROS Y NOIA

pop 14,000

Noia's old centre preserves a few reminders of past glories, in particular the Gothic **Igrexa de San Martiño** (Praza do Tapal). The **Igrexa de Santa María A Nova** (☎ 981 82 41 69; Carreiriña do Escultor Ferreiro; admission free; h 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat), together with its cemetery, forms a unique museum of headstones and funerary art.

Hotel Elisardo (☎ 981 82 01 30; Costa do Ferrador 15; r €42) is a small, comfortable lodging in a central street just 50m back from the waterfront.

For food and drinks, you can't beat **Tasca Tipica** (☎ 981 82 18 42; Rúa Cantón 15) in the 14th-century Pazo de Costa, along the street from the Igrexa de San Martiño.

Buses run here hourly from Santiago de Compostela (€2.95, 45 minutes), continuing to Muros.

Muros

pop 10,000

Founded in the 10th century towards the western end of the *ría*, en route to the Costa da Morte, Muros was long an important port for Santiago de Compostela. It has no great surviving monuments and apart from enjoying a beer or meal on the waterfront, there's not much to detain you, though there are a couple of nice beaches west of town.

South Shore

The main attraction here is the long series of beaches – such as **Praia de Agueira**, 2km past Portosín. The village of **Porto do Son**, 2km beyond, makes a relaxed stop. On a picturesque headland, 4km southwest, are the remains of a prehistoric settlement, the **Castro de Baroña**. The **Centro de Interpretación do Castro de Baroña** (Calle

de Fernando Fariña; admission €0.60; h 11am-2pm & 7-9pm Jul-Sep), in Porto do Son, provides background. Stretching south from the *castro*, **Praia Area Longa** is the first of a small string of surfing beaches down this side of the *ría*.

Hotel Villa del Son (☎ 981 85 30 49; www.hotel.villadelson.com; Rúa Trincherpe 11; s/d €32/51; p w), just back from the harbour and only a few years old, has simple but comfortable rooms and its own convenient café.

Drivers could detour to the **Dolmen de Axeitos**, a well-preserved megalithic monument, signposted between Xuño and Ribeira; and on to **Corrubedo** at the tip of the peninsula, with beaches either side of town, a lighthouse at the end of the road and a few relaxed bars around its small harbour.

RÍA DE AROUSA

Padrón

pop 10,000

The hottest thing to come out of Padrón is peppers. That's right, *pimientos de Padrón* – shrivelled little green things that taste very good, but beware the odd *very* hot one. Franciscan friars imported them from Mexico in the 16th century and the whole area now grows them to meet the demand.

This town, where Santiago's corpse supposedly arrived in Galicia, also prides itself as the former home of poet Rosalía de Castro, inspiration of Galicia's 19th-century *Rexurdimento* (cultural reawakening). The **Casa Museo Rosalía de Castro** (☎ 981 81 12 04; A Matanza; admission €1.40; h 10am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun), just behind the train station, is the prime stop on the so-called *Ruta Rosaliana* around this region.

Hostal del Jardín (☎ 981 81 09 50; Rúa de Salgado Araujo 3; r €43), a pretty stone building with a small garden and spacious rooms, is opposite the park on the road to the train station.

Buses run up to eight times daily to/from Santiago de Compostela (€1.60, 30 minutes) and Pontevedra (€3.20, one hour), and a few travel daily to/from Noia, Cambados and O Grove.

Catoira

About 15km from Padrón down the southern side of Río Ulla, which shortly afterwards widens into the Ría de Arousa, stand the **Torres do Oeste** at Catoira. These towers are what remains of *Castellum Honesti*, the medieval castle that was the key in protecting (not always successfully) Santiago de Compostela

against Norman raids. On the first Sunday of August, a Viking landing is staged here as part of a boisterous fiesta, the *Romería Viquinga*.

Illa de Arousa

Southwest of Catoira, Illa de Arousa is an island connected to the mainland by a 2km-long bridge. The small town here survives mainly from fishing and the whole place has a low profile. Some of the beaches facing the mainland are very pleasant and protected, with comparatively warm water, and a walking trail runs around the 29km coastline. The southern part of the island forms the **Parque Natural Carreirón**, with dunes, marshlands and abundant bird life.

Camping Salinas (☎ 986 52 74 44; sites per person/tent/car €4/3.80/3.80; h Jun-Sep) and **Camping El Edén** (☎ 986 55 15 20; sites per person/tent/car €4.55/4.15/4.65; h mid-Jun–mid-Sep) are on Playa de Salinas, facing the mainland.

Monbus (☎ 902 29 29 00) has a few daily buses linking the island with Vilanova de Arousa and Vilagarcía de Arousa, both of which have connections for Santiago de Compostela, Cambados and O Grove. **Autocares Núñez Barros** (☎ 986 54 31 00) operates to/from Pontevedra (€3, 1¼ hours) up to five times daily.

Cambados

pop 13,000

Founded by the Visigoths and a victim of constant harrying by Vikings in the 9th and 10th centuries, Cambados is today a peaceful *ría*-side town and the hub of the Albariño wine region, famed for its fruity whites. The **Centro Comarcal Expo-Salnés** (☎ 986 52 60 13; Paseo da Calzada; h 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, from 11am Sat & Sun) has displays on local architecture, archaeology and wine and will give you a map of **Albariño wineries** (h usually 11am-1pm & 4-8pm, some closed Sat & Sun), many of which are open for visits. At the north end of the town centre is the magnificent **Praza de Fefiñans**, bordered on two sides by a grand 16th-century mansion, the **Pazo de Fefiñans**, with a winery (h 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat mid-Mar–Dec) and on another by the 15th-century **Igrexa de San Bieito**.

Cambados has five museums (joint admission €3; h 10am-2.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Tue-Sun), mainly devoted to wine and fishing but there's also one preserving an old tide-operated cereal mill.

SLEEPING & EATING

Cambados has over 20 places to stay suiting all budgets. For food, take a walk beside the

parador up cobbled Rúa Príncipe and Rúa Real towards Praza de Fefiñans.

Pazo A Capitana (☎ 986 52 05 13; www.pazoacapitana.com in Spanish; Rúa Sabugueiro 42; s/d incl breakfast €75/96; p a w) This lovely country house dating from the 15th century sits off the Pontevedra road on the edge of town. It has beautiful gardens and an on-site winery so you don't need to move far for your wine tasting. The rooms are recently renovated but in classically antique style.

Parador de Cambados (☎ 986 54 22 50; www.parador.es; Paseo Calzada; s/d €120/150; p a i s w v) Recently modernised, in a 17th-century mansion in the heart of town. The restaurant here has special menus for vegetarians and celiacs.

A Casa da Leña (☎ 986 52 10 71; Praza das Rodas 1; raciones €3-15; h closed Tue) An attractive little stone-walled eatery serving some very tasty concoctions including *revuelto de grelos con jamón* (scrambled eggs with ham and greens) and Galician *tetilla* cheese with anchovies and red peppers. Plenty of wine too, of course.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Up to five buses a day run to/from Santiago de Compostela (€4.60, one hour), up to nine to/from Pontevedra (€2.15, one hour) and up to seven to/from O Grove (some via Sanxenxo).

O Grove

pop 11,000
How you react to O Grove may depend on the weather. It's a strange mix of England's Blackpool and some of Italy's Adriatic 'family' resorts, and in winter much of it is closed. Arguably the best thing about the area is **Praia A Lanzada** (p566), on the isthmus linking O Grove to the mainland.

The **tourist office** (☎ 986 73 14 15; www.turismo.grove.com; Praza do Corgo 1; h 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun) is near the fishing harbour. Fish auctions are staged in the nearby Lonxa (Fish Market) at 7am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Acquariumgalicia (☎ 986 73 15 15; admission €9; h 10am-9pm Jun-mid-Oct, 10am-8pm Fri-Sun mid-Oct-May), at Punta Moreiras on the northwest side of the O Grove peninsula, houses sea creatures mainly from the Galician coasts.

In steady weather from April to November, numerous companies run *ría* cruises, chiefly to look at the bateas – platforms where mussels, oysters and scallops are cultivated. Tours, including mussel tastings, cost €13 per person and run for 1¼ hours.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are half a dozen camping grounds on the west side of the O Grove peninsula. In town, accommodation is mostly spread along Rúa Castelao, running between the centre and the bridge to Illa A Toxa (a verdant island of luxury hotels, villas, apartments and a golf course).

Hostal Montesol (☎ 986 73 09 16; www.hostalmontesol.net; Rúa Castelao 160; r €40) On the waterfront near the bridge, this friendly, well-kept *hostal* offers comfy beds and panoramic *ría* views.

Hotel Maruxia (☎ 986 73 27 95; Rúa Luis Casais 14; s/d €63/85; w) No sea views except from the roof terrace, but the Maruxia is a solidly comfortable central hotel offering carpeted rooms with good, big bathrooms.

Of the slew of large seafood houses facing the harbour, **El Crisol** (☎ 986 73 00 99; Rúa do Hospital 10; fish dishes €13-16; h closed lunch Mon) is up there with the best.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses run to/from Cambados, Pontevedra, Santiago de Compostela and elsewhere. The bus station is on Beiramar, by the port.

PONTEVEDRA

pop 78,000 / elevation 290m
Galicia's smallest provincial capital has managed to preserve intact a classic old centre dotted with attractive plazas linked by winding streets. This is also the living centre of a vibrant little city – great for leisurely exploring interspersed with visits to the many appealing bars and restaurants.

History

In the 16th century Pontevedra was the biggest city in Galicia and an important port. Columbus' flagship, the *Santa María*, was built here. In the 17th century the city began to decline in the face of growing competition in the *ría* and the silting up of its port. Nevertheless, Pontevedra was made provincial capital in 1835 and today tourism is a healthy boon.

Orientation & Information

The historic centre is clearly confined within a rough circle drawn by the former city walls. Inside this area you'll find several sleeping, eating and drinking options and most of what you'll want to see.

Banks and other offices lie on or near Rúa de Michelena, the main drag of the newer town.

Ciber Las Ruinas (Rúa do Marqués de Riestra 21; per hr €1.80; h 10am-1am Mon-Fri, 11am-1am Sat, 5pm-1am Sun)

Municipal tourist information kiosks (Praza de España & Praza de Ourense; h 10am-1.30pm & 5-7.30pm Jun-Nov)

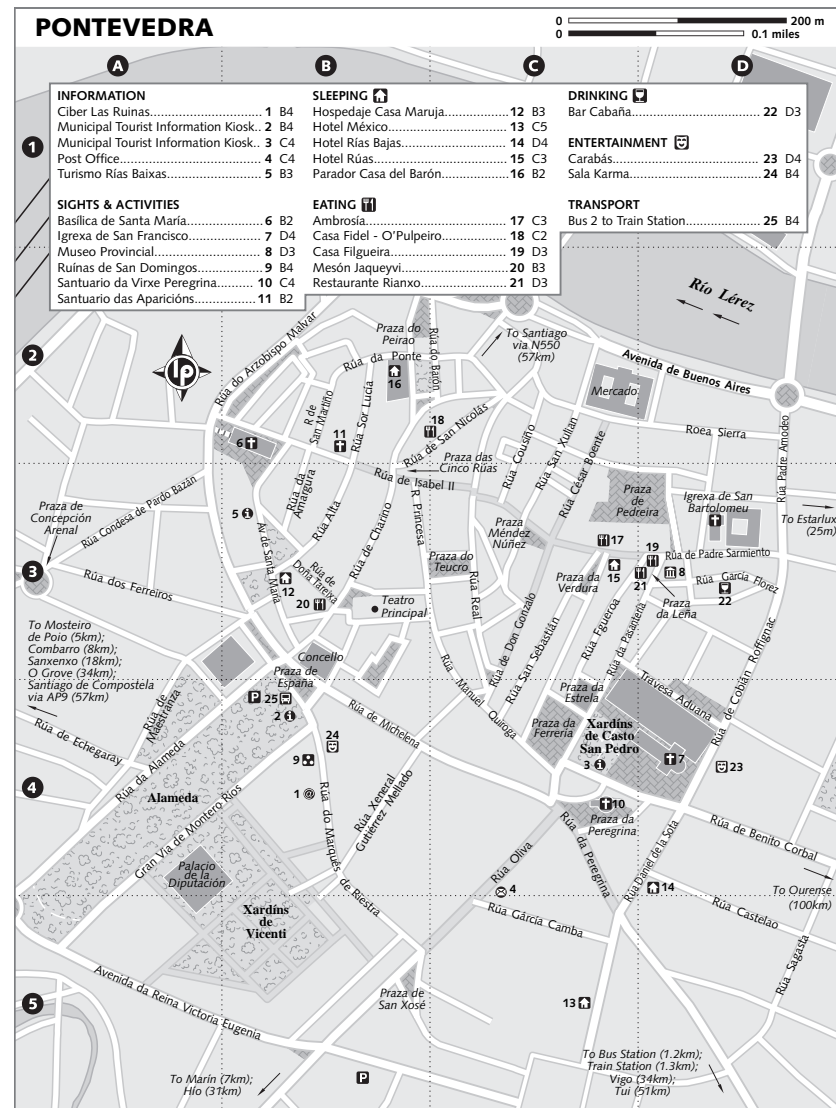
Post office (Rúa Oliva)

Turismo Rías Baixas (☎ 986 84 26 90; www.riasbaixas.org; Praza de Santa María; h 9am-9pm Mon-Fri,

10am-2.30pm & 4.30-8pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat & Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun) Heaps of information on all Pontevedra province.

Sights

Starting at the southeastern edge of the old town, you can't miss the distinctive curved façade of the **Santuario da Virxe Peregrina**, an 18th-century



caprice with a distinctly Portuguese flavour. The broad, part-colonnaded **Praza da Ferrería**, nearby, displays an eclectic collection of buildings dating as far back as the 15th century. Set back from Praza da Ferrería in its own gardens is the 14th-century **Igrexa de San Francisco** (h 7.30am-12.45pm & 5.30-9pm), believed to have been founded personally by St Francis of Assisi when on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. What was the adjacent convent is now the local tax office.

Head down **Rúa da Pasantería** and you emerge in **Praza da Leña**, one of Pontevedra's most enchanting niches, partly colonnaded and with a *cruceiro* (wayside crucifix) in the middle. Just off it stands the eclectic **Museo Provincial** (986 85 14 55; Rúa da Pasantería 10; admission free; h at least 10am-1.30pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat year-round, 11am-2pm Sun Oct-May), centred on two 18th-century palaces joined by an arch. The collection ranges from Bronze Age archaeological finds to Galician crafts and Renaissance and modern painting. Part of the archaeological collection is housed in the **Ruínas de San Domingos**, a ruined 14th-century church beside the elegant **Alameda gardens**.

West of the museum, the area known as **As Cinco Rúas** is a hub of Pontevedra nightlife. The tiny **Praza das Cinco Rúas**, where five lanes converge, is marked by a *cruceiro*.

West of **Praza das Cinco Rúas**, up **Rúa de Isabel II**, stands the **Basilica de Santa María** (h 10am-1pm & 5-9pm), a mainly Gothic church with a whiff of Plateresque and Portuguese Manueline influences. Signposted on the way up is the **Santuario das Aparicións** (h 9am-1.30pm & 4-6pm), a chapel and lodgings where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to the 20th-century child visionary **Lucía de Fátima**.

Festivals & Events

The **Festas da Peregrina**, held for a week in mid-August, feature a big funfair on the **Alameda** and concerts in **Praza da Ferrería**. In late July, the **Festival Internacional de Jazz e Blues de Pontevedra** (www.jazzpontevedra.com) attracts topnotch musicians from around the world.

Sleeping

Hospedaje Casa Maruja (986 85 49 01; Avenida de Santa María 12; s/d €25/37) The best budget bet in the old town has 10 spotless, good-sized rooms, and balconies over a tranquil plaza.

Hotel México (986 85 90 06; Rúa de Andrés Muruais 10; s/d €36/56; p) Just outside the old town, this hotel is nothing spectacular but has colourful, well-equipped rooms with gleaming bathrooms.

Hotel Rúas (986 84 64 16; hotelruas@terra.es; Rúa de Padre Sarmiento 37; s/d €40/60; p a i v) Flanked by two plazas in the heart of the old city, **Hotel Rúas** is a sleek, comfortable place to spend the night, with original colour combos like yellow and green.

Hotel Rías Bajas (986 85 51 00; hotelriabajas.com; Rúa Daniel de la Sota 7; s €55-64, d €86-105; p) Not quite in the old city, this is a good option for above-average comfort. The good big rooms, nearly all external, are adorned with pleasing art and 19th-century-style furnishings.

Parador Casa del Barón (986 85 58 00; www.parador.es; Rúa do Barón 19; s/d €120/150; p a i) Housed in a large Renaissance/neoclassical mansion, it's one of Spain's most appealing *paradores*, full of historical atmosphere and smooth service.

Eating

Tapas in many Pontevedra watering holes are not the mere titbits you get elsewhere, but a wholesome *media-ración* size.

Casa Figueira (986 85 88 15; Praza da Leña 2; tapas €3.50-10; h closed Sun) Among other items from its delectable tapas list, you'll want to try the *filloas* (€3.50) – crepes stuffed with oyster mushrooms, salt cod and so on.

Casa Fidel – O Pulpeiro (986 85 12 34; Rúa de San Nicolás 7; pulpo á feira €8) The **Cinco Rúas** area is an eating and drinking hub and **Casa Fidel** is the zone's octopus specialist: look for the boiling tubs of chopped-up cephalopod.

Mesón Jaqueyvi (986 86 18 20; Rúa de Doña Tareixa 1; tapas €2-10, tablas €6-14) Terrific tapas and wine bar on the small plaza in front of the theatre, specialising in cheeses, hams, pâtés, *empanadas* and marvellous tortillas.

Ambrosia (986 84 24 80; Rúa de Padre Sarmiento 31; mains & set menu €10; h 1.30-3.45pm Mon-Sat, 9-11.30pm Fri & Sat; v) Stylish 'new vegetarian' place appropriately situated on **Praza da Verdura** (Vegetable Square). The creative taste combinations run from tofu and mango brochettes to spicy rice-and-egg kofta.

Restaurante Rianxo (986 85 52 11; Praza da Leña 6; set menu €10; h closed Sun) If you'd like to sit down and tuck into a proper meal, head upstairs to the *comedor* here for good home-style cooking.

Drinking

The best places for coffee and people-watching are the cafés on the many squares. **Praza da Ferrería** probably wins on this score.

For evening drinks, head for old-town squares like **Praza da Verdura** or **Praza da Leña**. From there you can head to the pocket of bars on **Rúa do Barón** and then, for some heftier *marcha* (action), up the road to the thumping music bars of **Rúa de Charino** – you'll soon get a feel for what's right for you. Outside the bars, the stately porticoes of **Praza de Pedreira** become the scene of major partying long after dark.

For a more bohemian atmosphere, head for **Bar Cabaña** (986 85 28 24; Rúa García Flórez 22; h from 10.30pm), a subterranean jazz den.

Entertainment

If it's nightclubs you're after, try **Estarlux** (Rúa Cruz Vermella 6; h from midnight Thu-Sat), with eclectic DJ programming over a 6000-watt system, or Pontevedra's biggest discotheque **Carabás** (986 86 26 95; Rúa de Cobián Roffignac 4; h from 1am Thu-Fri, 3am Sat), southeast of the town centre.

Spanish touring bands play at **Estarlux**; **Sala Karma** (Rúa do Marqués de Riestra 34; admission varies) often hosts local bands from Thursday to Saturday.

Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (986 85 24 08; Rúa da Estación) is about 1.5km southeast of the town centre. Frequent services link Pontevedra with **Vigo** (€2.30, 30 minutes), and at least nine buses travel the AP9 motorway to **Santiago de Compostela** (€4.95, one hour); at least six continue to **A Coruña** (€11, two hours). Other **Santiago-bound** buses stop in **Padrón**. **Monbus** (986 902 29 29 00) runs roughly hourly to/from **Combarro**, **Sanxenxo** and **O Grove** (€3.40, one hour). Buses also go to/from **Cambados**, **Tui**, **Ourense**, **Lugo** and **Madrid**.

Pontevedra's train station (986 85 13 13), across the street from the bus station, is on the **Vigo-Santiago de Compostela** line, with almost hourly train services to those cities and **A Coruña**.

Getting Around

Local circular-route buses (€0.90) run from the bus and train stations to **Praza de España**, in front of the **Concello** (City Hall) building.

RÍA DE PONTEVEDRA Mosteiro de Poio

Just northwest of Pontevedra (in fact barely separated from it now), the town of **San Xoán de Poio** is dominated by its grand monastery

(admission €1.50; h 10am-1.30pm Mon-Sat & 4.30-8pm daily May-mid-Oct, 10am-1pm Mon-Sat & 4-6pm daily mid-Oct-Apr). The first church here may have been built in the 7th century, and the gardens of the monastery's 16th-century **Claustro de las Procesiones** are gathered around a baroque fountain.

The nun-run **Hospedería Monasterio de Poio** (986 77 00 00; hospederiamonasterio@terra.es; s/d €34.24/41.73, with shared bathroom €18.19/27.82; h Easter-Oct) offers good-sized, adequately comfortable rooms in the monastery.

Combarro

pop 1300

The fishing village of **Combarro**, though hardly indifferent to the tourist dollar, has managed to retain some measure of its original character. It possesses a very quaint area of old stone houses and a picturesque string of *hórreos* down near the waterfront.

Taberna O Peirao (986 77 13 97; Rúa do Mar 6; seafood raciones €6.50-11) is the best of several spots among the waterfront *hórreos* where you can enjoy a leisurely meal. The women here bake some amazing *empanadas de berberecho* (cockles), and in summer they stoke up the sardine grill.

The road west towards **Sanxenxo** is liberally laced with *hostales*.

Monbus buses between Pontevedra and **Sanxenxo** stop at **Combarro**.

Sanxenxo

pop 15,000

Sanxenxo (Castilian: **Sangenjo**), 10km west of **Combarro**, is about as close as Galicia comes to emulating Spain's Mediterranean holiday coast. The main town beach, **Praia de Silgar**, is fine and sandy, if crowded in summer. There's a **tourist office** (986 72 02 85; www.sanxenxo.org; Porto Juan Carlos I; h 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sun), plus a large car park, in the shiny new marina development immediately east of the beach.

Rúa de Carlos Casas, running uphill just east of **Praia de Silgar**, has a few places offering decent rooms at decent prices, the best being **Hotel Casa Román** (986 72 00 31; Rúa de Carlos Casas 2; r €48).

For a seafront location, the stylish and comfortable **Hotel Rotilio** (986 72 02 00; www.hotelrotilio.com in Spanish; Avenida do Porto 7; s/d €58/103; p a) overlooks both **Praia de Silgar** and the marina. All 40 rooms are exterior and the majority have balconies. Its restaurant, **La Taberna de Rotilio** (mains €15-25; h closed Sun & Mon)

serves up terrific Galician seafood and meat with a creative touch in a fairly formal setting. Portonovo, 2km west, has many tapas bars and seafood eateries.

Buses between Pontevedra and O Grove (over 20 a day in summer) stop in Sanxenxo.

Praia A Lanzada

The coastal road beyond Portonovo is dotted with small beaches, hotels, *hostales* and camping grounds all the way around to the longest beach in the Ría de Pontevedra – the 2.3km-long, dune-backed Praia A Lanzada, along the west side of the isthmus leading to the O Grove promontory. The beach is free of the resort feel, but it's *not* deserted and remote! O Grove-bound buses will drop you here.

Illa de Ons

One diversion from Sanxenxo in summer is to take a boat out to Ons island, with its sandy beaches, cliffs, ruins, walking trails, rich bird life, no motor vehicles and a camping area (€ 986 68 76 96; camping free; 1 Jul-Sep). Campers must obtain a *tarjeta de acampada* (camping card) with their boat ticket.

Weather permitting, *Cruceros Rías Baixas* (€ 986 73 13 43; www.crucerosriasbaixas.com in Spanish) sails to/from Illa de Ons several times daily (return €12) from Sanxenxo from late June to mid-September, and on weekends in the earlier part of June.

South Shore

Don't be put off by the road from Pontevedra to Marín. It's an ugly business that bears little resemblance to what lies beyond.

HÍO & AROUND

Just west of the C550 towards the end of the *ría*, the peaceful village of Hío has its focal point in Galicia's most remarkable *cruceiro*, sculpted during the 19th century from a single block of stone. Key passages of Christian teaching, from Adam and Eve's sinful errors through to the taking down of Christ from the cross, are narrated up its length.

About 2.5km north of Hío by paved road is a fairly tranquil sandy beach, *Praia Areabrava*. Another paved road heads 5km roughly southwest from Hío to *Cabo de Home*, where you can ramble over rocky crags and enjoy great views of the Illas Cies and the Atlantic. Along the way are turn-offs for several beaches on the Ría de Vigo.

Hostal Stop (€ 986 32 94 75; Rúa Igrexario 71, Hío; r €30-40; 1 Jun-Sep), near the famous *cruceiro*, has pleasant rooms and a nice little garden.

Autobuses Cerqueiro (€ 986 32 02 54) runs a few daily buses from Cangas to Hío. Monbus' Pontevedra–Cangas service (at least 10 times daily) stops at Vilariño, 1.5km east of Hío.

RÍA DE VIGO

It's enjoyable to drive along the northern bank of the *ría*. You can see serried ranks of *bateas* and observe Vigo in the distance. But except for the far western area around Hío (left), there's not much to stop for. If you have your own transport, head a few kilometres inland from Moaña to the *Mirador de Cotoredondo*, a lookout commanding magical views over both the Ría de Vigo, with its imposing Puente de Rande suspension bridge, and the Ría de Pontevedra.

VIGO

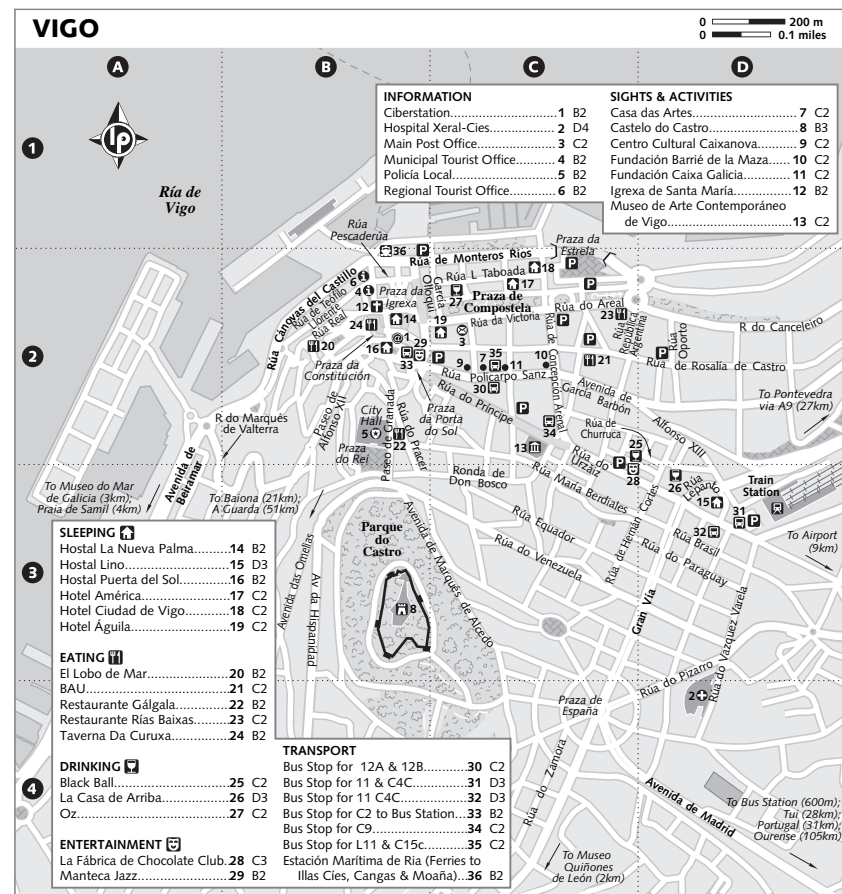
pop 276,000

Like Galicia's other large port and industrial centre, A Coruña, Vigo is short on monuments but makes up for that with a fabulous coastal setting, a busy cultural scene and a vibrant nightlife. The city has reclaimed its waterfront from unsightly docks and can claim to be Galicia's artistic capital. Vigo's long port – home to, among other things, Europe's biggest fishing fleet – once boasted a busy passenger terminal. These days, the furthest you'll get by sea is the Illas Cies, unless you're on one of the cruise ships that drop in here.

People started to notice Vigo in the Middle Ages when it began to overtake Baiona as a major port. Although the first industries started up here in the 18th century, Vigo's major development was in the 20th century, during which its population grew fifteenfold.

Orientation

The train station is 800m southeast of the old centre. The bus station is on Avenida de Madrid, about 1.4km beyond. From near the train station, Rúa do Urzáiz and its pedestrianised continuation, Rúa do Príncipe, lead down to Praza da Porta do Sol, the gateway to the old centre and port area. The heart of the modern town is immediately east of the old centre, between Rúa do Príncipe and the waterfront.



Information

The two tourist offices are within a block of each other, just up from the passenger port. There's no shortage of banks and ATMs, particularly along Avenida de García Barbón.

CiberStation (€ 986 22 36 35; Praza da Princesa 3; per hr €1.80; 10am-2am Mon-Sat, 11am-2am Sun)

Hospital Xeral-Cies (€ 986 81 60 00; Rúa do Pizarro 22)

Municipal tourist office (€ 986 22 47 57; www.turismodevigo.org; Rúa de Teófilo Llorente 5; 10am-2pm & 4-7.30pm)

Policia Local (€ 986 81 01 01; Praza do Rei)

Post office (Rúa da Victoria)

Regional tourist office (€ 986 43 05 77; Rúa Cánovas del Castillo 22; 9.30am or 10am-2pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 9.30am-2pm & 4.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat Oct-Jun)

Sights & Activities

The entrance to the Casco Vello (Old Town) from the bustling thoroughfares of central Vigo is marked by Praza da Princesa. Elegant Praza da Constitución is a pleasant spot for a morning coffee. Head north down Rúa dos Cesteiros, lined by wicker shops, and you'll come upon the Igrexa de Santa María, built in 1816 – long after its Romanesque predecessor had been burnt down by Sir Francis Drake. Nearby Praza da Almeida is home to a few art galleries, while narrow Rúa Pescadería, with its seafood eateries, is the old town's liveliest street.

The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Vigo (Marco; € 986 11 39 00; www.marcovigo.com; Rúa do Príncipe 54; admission €3; 11am-9pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun; √) is one of the city's top venues for exhibitions

in a variety of artistic forms, from painting and sculpture to cinema, fashion and design.

The recently opened **Fundación Barrié de la Maza** (☎ 986 11 02 20; www.fbarrie.org; Rúa Policarpo Sanz 31; admission free; 10am-1pm & 5.30-8.30pm Tue-Fri, noon-2pm & 5.30-8.30pm Sat & Sun) is an avant-garde, hi-tech exhibition and performance venue where walls, floors and seats can retract, ascend and descend to accommodate events of all kinds – worth a look for the building alone.

For exhibitions, also check out the **Casa das Artes, Centro Cultural Caixanova** and **Fundación Caixa Galicia**. All are on Rúa Policarpo Sanz and generally open from 6pm to 9pm Monday to Friday, 11am to 2pm and 6pm to 9pm Saturday, and 11am to 2pm Sunday.

Directly south (and uphill) of the old town you can wander in the verdant **Parque do Castro**, and inspect the **Castelo do Castro** that formed part of the city's defences built under Felipe IV.

English and French gardens surround the **Museo Quiñones de León** (☎ 986 29 50 70; Parque de Castrelos; admission free; 10am-8pm Tue-Fri, 5-8pm Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun; ♪), in a 17th-century palace 3km south of the city centre. The museum contains archaeological and historical material and two major painting collections. Bus 20 from Porto do Sol heads there via Paseo Alfonso XII.

The best beach within reach is southwest of the city centre at **Praia de Samil** – 1.8km long and sandy, with great views of the Illas Cies. Catch bus 15C westbound on Policarpo Sanz or southbound on Paseo Alfonso XII to get there. On the way out to Samil, the **Museo do Mar de Galicia** (☎ 986 24 76 91; Avenida Atlántida 160; admission €3; 11am-8pm Tue-Thu, 11am-11.30pm Fri & Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) features innovatively arranged exhibits on Galicia's intimate relationship with the sea.

Sleeping

Hostal La Nueva Palma (☎ 986 43 06 78; Rúa Palma 7; s/d €22/28) This humble old-town option offers decent-sized rooms, some with balcony, facing the Igrexa de Santa María.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Águila (☎ 986 43 13 98; www.hotelaguila.com; Rúa da Victoria 6; s/d incl breakfast €32/47; p i) East of the old town, the Águila has been imaginatively renovated with paint washes and prints to make the most of its big, old-fashioned rooms – exceptionally good value.

Hotel Puerta del Sol (☎ 986 22 23 64; www.alojami.entosvigo.com; Porta do Sol 14; s/d €59/72; p i) The charming rooms at this renovated hotel have CD players and terrific views over Praza da Princesa or Praza da Constitución. It's very popular, so call ahead.

Hotel Lino (☎ 986 44 70 04; www.hotel-lino.com in Spanish; Rúa Lepanto 26; s/d €60/84) One of many places outside the train station, the Lino has a good deal more character than the rest, with wraparound balconies and 45 warmly decorated rooms.

Hotel América (☎ 986 43 89 22; www.hotelamerica-vigo.com; Rúa de Pablo Morello 6; s/d incl breakfast €61/91; a ♪) The revamped América exudes a modishly minimalist elegance, and with just 44 rooms, service is more personal than in larger establishments.

Hotel Ciudad de Vigo (☎ 986 22 87 20; www.ciudaddevigo.com; Rúa de Concepción Arenal 5; s/d €111/139; a i) For more luxury, this is a centrally located, top-end hotel with big, elegant, well-equipped rooms.

Eating

Rúa Pescadería is a short old-town block jammed with people tucking into fresh seafood. You can buy oysters for €6 to €10 per dozen from the shuckers at the west end of the street and sit down to eat them with a drink at one of the neighbouring restaurants. Oysters and Albariño wine here are Vigo's traditional Sunday-morning hangover cure.

Restaurante Rías Baixas (☎ 986 22 30 41; Rúa República de Argentina 2; menu €7, fish dishes €8-11; 1 closed Sun afternoon & Wed) Rarely visited by tourists, this lively dining hall is the place to head for fresh fish, traditionally prepared.

Restaurante Gálgala (☎ 986 22 14 17; Rúa do Pracer 4; meals around €15; 1-4pm Tue-Sat, 8.30-11.30pm Fri & Sat) A few minutes' walk uphill from the old town, this small vegetarian restaurant serves a variety of well-prepared, reasonably priced dishes.

Taverna Da Curuxa (☎ 986 43 88 57; Rúa dos Cesteiros 7; 1 closed Tue) The winding lanes and blind alleys of old Vigo are laced with tapas bars and eateries of all descriptions. This bar off Praza da Constitución serves very tasty *cazolas* (casseroles) and good wine. It's popular with a 20s to 30s crowd.

El Lobo de Mar (Rúa Anguía; raciones €4-6; 1 closed Sun) This little old-town eatery simply serves up great home-style fresh fish and seafood prepared in an open kitchen at one end of the premises.

BAU (☎ 986 22 22 14; Rúa de Rosalía de Castro 6; mains €10-18; 1 closed Sun) Come here for a creative twist on Galician favourites, eg warm quail salad or pork sirloin with dates in white wine.

Drinking & Entertainment

On weekend evenings, in particular, some of the taverns along Rúas Real and Teófilo Llorente in the old town can get quite lively. Many good bars are also dotted along Rúa de Montero Ríos (with *terrazas* opposite the waterfront) and Rúa do Areal and the streets behind them.

Manteca Jazz (Rúa Carral 3; admission varies; 1 from 11pm Mon-Thu, from midnight Fri & Sat) This sizable city-centre jazz den hosts Wednesday jam sessions and bands most Fridays and Saturdays.

Australians homesick for the sight of a wombat road sign should make for **Oz** (Praza de Compostela). The real *zona de marcha* is southeast around Rúas de Churrúa, Rogelio Abalde and Irmadiños. You might start at **La Casa de Arriba** (Rúa de Iglesias Esponda), a rock pub open from early evening, or the retro lounge-style **Black Ball** (Rúa de Churrúa 8), then stop into **La Fábrica de Chocolate Club** (☎ 986 13 58 84; Rúa de Rogelio Abalde 22; 1 from 9pm) which hosts three or four varied bands or guest DJs each week. For clubs and pubs where you can dance after the other bars have closed, head to Gran Vía.

Getting There & Away

AIR
Vigo's **Peinador airport** (☎ 986 26 82 00) is about 10km east of the centre. Iberia flies to/from Bilbao, Barcelona and Madrid daily. Spanair also serves Barcelona and Madrid. Air France and Air Europa have flights to/from Paris.

BOAT

Ferries to Cangas sail about every half-hour from 6.30am to 10.30pm year-round (€1.75). For details on ferries to the Illas Cies, see right.

BUS

From the **bus station** (☎ 986 37 34 11; Avenida de Madrid 57) there are frequent services to Pontevedra (€2.30, 30 minutes), Santiago de Compostela (€7.25, 1½ hours), A Coruña (€12.85, 2½ hours), Ourense, Lugo, Baiona, Tui and A Guarda. Monbus runs to Sanxenxo and O Grove. AutoRes goes six times daily to Madrid (€31 to €39, 6½ to 8½ hours), and other buses head for Oviedo, Santander, Bilbao, Pamplona, Barcelona, Salamanca, Seville and elsewhere.

Autna runs twice daily Monday to Friday (once daily on weekends) to/from Porto, Portugal (€10, 2½ hours), with connections there for Lisbon. ALSA runs to Porto (€16, two hours) and Lisbon (€33, 7½ hours) daily.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The AP9 tollway runs to A Coruña via Pontevedra (€2.65) and Santiago de Compostela.

TRAIN

Trains run approximately hourly to Pontevedra (€1.85 to €2.50, 30 minutes), Santiago de Compostela (€5.45 to €7.40, 1¼ to 1¾ hours) and A Coruña, and seven times daily to Ourense. There are daily trains to Madrid and Barcelona.

Getting Around

Vigo has a good local bus system (€1 per ride). Bus C9 runs between the city centre and the airport; buses C2 and C4C link the centre and the bus station; and bus 11 joins the centre with Rúa do Urzáiz close to the train station. See the Vigo map (p567) for locations of stops.

ILLAS CIES

The best beaches in the Rías Baixas aren't really in the *rias* at all. Rather, you need to go to the Illas Cies. This little archipelago, reaching 197m above sea level, forms a 6km breakwater that protects Vigo and its *ría* from the Atlantic's fury. Two of the three main islands, Illa do Faro and Illa de Monteagudo, are linked by a sand crescent that forms a lagoon known as Lago dos Nenos. Together with Ons, Sálvora and Cortegada islands further north, the Illas Cies constitute the **Parque Nacional de las Islas Atlánticas de Galicia**, a nesting sanctuary for seabirds.

You can only visit the Illas Cies during Semana Santa, on weekends from May to early June and daily from early June to early September. To stay overnight you must book for **Camping Illas Cies** (sites per person/tent €6.60/6.85; ♪) through the camping ground's office (☎ 986 43 83 58) at the Illas Cies boat terminal in Vigo. The camping ground has a restaurant and shop, and a capacity of 800 people – often filled in August.

Boats to the islands are operated by **Naviera Mar de Ons** (☎ 986 22 52 72; www.mardeons.com in Spanish). During the season, weather permitting, up to eight daily trips are made from Vigo (45 minutes one-way), and beginning in July, up to four each from Baiona and Cangas. Wherever you start, return tickets cost €16.50.

THE SOUTHWEST

Though skipped by many travellers, this corner of Galicia is home to several interesting and handsome old towns and spectacular scenery.

THE COAST

Baiona

pop 10,000
On 1 March 1493, the caravel *Pinta* came into view off Baiona (Castilian: Bayona), bearing the remarkable news that Christopher Columbus had made it to the Indies. (In fact, he had bumped into the Americas.) Then an important trading port, Baiona was later eclipsed by Vigo. Today it's one of Galicia's premier summer resorts, but understated compared with its Mediterranean counterparts, and has a small *casco antigo* (old city) that's worth a wander.

There is a **tourist information booth** (☎ 986 68 70 67; www.baiona.org in Spanish; Paseo da Ribeira; 10am–11am–2pm & 4–7pm Apr–Dec) on the approach to the Monte Boi promontory. The pine-covered promontory supports the **Fortaleza de Monterreal** (pedestrian/car €1/4; 10.30am–9.30pm), erected between the 11th and 17th centuries, and protected by a mighty 3km circle of walls. Also within the precinct today is a luxurious **parador** (www.parador.es).

For beaches, head along the coastal road towards Vigo. About 1.5km from the centre of Baiona is **Praia Ladeira**, but better (if still with an urban background) is the magnificent sweep of **Praia América** at Nigrán, about 4km north. Most buses between Baiona and Vigo stop at these beaches.

SLEEPING & EATING

Baiona's harbour-front drive, and, one block inland, Rúa de Ventura Misa, offer at least half-a-dozen places to stay. **Hospedaje Kin** (☎ 986 35 56 95; Rúa de Ventura Misa 27; r with/without bathroom €50/35; 1 Jun–Sep) is among the least expensive places in town, and fills up early in August. For more comfort, you won't find a cosier place than the sturdy old **Hotel Tres Carabelas** (☎ 986 35 54 41; www.hoteltrscarabelas.com; Rúa de Ventura Misa 61; s/d €50/64).

The cobbled lanes in the centre of town, including Rúa do Conde and Rúa de Ventura Misa, are full of restaurants, tapas bars and watering holes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

ATSA (☎ 986 35 53 30) buses run north to Vigo (€2) every 30 minutes till 9pm most days, and a couple a day go south to A Guarda, from in front of the *lonja* (fish market) by the harbour. In summer boats sail to the Illas Cíes (see p569).

A Guarda

pop 10,000
The fishing port of A Guarda (Castilian: La Guardia) sits just north of where Galicia's longest river, Río Miño, enters the Atlantic. The treat here is to head 4km up from the town to **Monte de Santa Trega** (admission in vehicle per person Tue–Sun Easter–early Dec €0.90, other times free). On the way up you can inspect a *castro*, where a couple of the primitive circular dwellings have been restored, and at the top is a small museum with a few archaeological finds. But best of all are the magnificent views up the Miño, across to Portugal and out over the Atlantic.

A Guarda's top sleeping choice, **Hotel Convento de San Benito** (☎ 986 61 11 66; www.hotelsanbenito.com; Praza de San Bieito; s/d €52/75; a i), is housed in a lovely former convent down by the harbour. Its elegant rooms are sound-proofed and the room rates are pretty reasonable.

A dozen bars and restaurants by the harbour serve tapas and meals; most fish and seafood will have been caught the same day you eat it. Lobster is a big speciality here.

One of the best choices is the first in line, **Porto Guardés** (☎ 986 61 34 88; Rúa do Porto 1; fish dishes €5–10), where reasonably priced swordfish, tuna, cod and other seafood are served upon checked tablecloths.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most ATSA (☎ 986 61 02 55) buses to/from Vigo (€4.80, one to 1½ hours) run via Tui, but a few go via Baiona. Monday-to-Friday services are frequent, but on Sunday there are only six buses.

A **transbordador** (ferry) runs from Camposancos, just inside the heads of the Miño, to Caminha in Portugal, from where you can get to the first of a string of sandy ocean beaches on the way south to Viana do Castelo. Departures are at least hourly from 9.30am to 7.30pm (to 9.30pm March to June, to 10.30pm July and August). Fares are €0.65/2.60 per person/car.

RÍO MIÑO

Tui

pop 16,000 / elevation 58m

Tui (Castilian: Tuy) is a gem: a pretty old town sitting on Río Miño. Especially popular in summer when its little bars come alive, it's ideally situated by a bridge across to Portugal's equally interesting Valença. A fair crowd of Portuguese day-trippers fill Tui on weekends and Spaniards reciprocate in Valença.

Tui briefly hosted the court of the Visigothic king Witiza (r AD 702–10). It was subsequently attacked several times by Spain's Muslim invaders and Norman raiders. Later still it found itself on the front line during various wars between Spain and Portugal.

There's a **regional tourist office** (☎ 986 60 17 89; Rúa Colón 2; 1 9.30am–2pm & 4.30–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 10.30am–12.30pm Sat) almost opposite the Hotel Colón.

SIGHTS

The brooding, fortress-like **cathedral** (☎ 986 60 05 11; admission €2, Jul–mid-Sep €3; 1 9.30am–1.30pm & 4–7pm, to 9pm Jul–mid-Sep) dominates Tui's small old town. Completed in 1225, the cathedral was much altered in the 15th century and the extra stone bracing was added after the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. Entry to the main body of the cathedral through its lovely Gothic portico costs nothing, but it's well worth getting the ticket to the Gothic cloister, Romanesque chapter house, the tower and gardens with views over the river, the cathedral museum and the **Museo Diocesano** (1 Easter–mid-Oct), across the street, with its archaeology and art collection.

The surrounding narrow lanes hold a pair of *cruceiros* and various chapels including the **Iglesia de San Telmo**, containing relics of the patron saint of sailors.

Beyond the old town centre, a riverside walk from the **Iglesia de Santo Domingo** is enticing. This church's baroque façade hides a largely 14th-century interior (admission is included with the cathedral ticket).

SLEEPING

Hostal San Telmo (☎ 986 60 30 11; Avenida de la Concordia 88; s/d €30/40) A comfortable if unremarkable option, the San Telmo is a 15-minute walk from the old town.

Hotel Colón (☎ 986 60 02 23; www.hotelcolontuy.com; Rúa Colón 11; s €38–43, d €72–88, apt for 2 €86–99; p a i s) This modern hotel with 45 rooms and 21 apartments (some duplex) has stylishly

clean-cut lines and is well equipped with two pools, tennis court and restaurant. It's 500m along the main drag from the old town.

EATING & DRINKING

There are several inviting places near the cathedral. On Friday to Sunday nights, **Entre-fornos** and other quaint cobblestone streets behind the cathedral are the scene of some major partying.

O Vello Cabalo Furado (☎ 986 60 19 88; Rúa Seijas 2; mains €8–15; 1 closed Tue Oct–Jun, Sun Jul–Sep) Not to be confused with the inferior O Cabalo Furado around the corner, this large inviting dining hall puts together a very hearty lunch. Check out the *cocido gallego* (Galician stew; €10).

Mesón Jaqueyvi (Praza do Concello 4; tapas & tablas €2–14; 1 closed Tue) This tavern serves some unusual snacks (sea urchin caviar, fried asparagus), though most patrons just order a helping of Serrano ham.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Up to 30 daily ATSA buses to Vigo (€2.85, 30 minutes) and A Guarda (€2.70, 30 minutes) stop on Paseo de Calvo Sotelo, opposite Librería Byblos. Service is reduced at weekends. Autna buses between Vigo and Portugal stop at the Puente Internacional.

Ribadavia

pop 5000 / elevation 100m

About 80km up the Miño from Tui towards Ourense, Ribadavia is in the heart of Ribeiro wine country, producing some of the best whites in the country. It was once Galicia's most important Jewish settlement and has managed to preserve a lovely stone-built medieval town centre, with a patchwork of uneven little cobbled squares, lined with heavy stone arcades and *galerías*, which is a pleasure to explore. Even after Isabel and Fernando decided to expel Jews in 1492, most here managed to hang on by converting to Christianity or fleeing temporarily to Portugal.

The enthusiastic **tourist office** (☎ 988 47 12 75; www.ribadavia.com; Praza Maior 7; 1 10am–3pm & 5–8.30pm Jun–Sep, 9.30am–2.30pm & 4–7pm Mon–Sat, 10.30am–3pm Sun Oct–May) is in a 17th-century palace on the main square. Upstairs is the **Centro de Información Xudía** (admission €1), with an exhibition on the Jews of Galicia.

The **Barrio Xudío** (Jewish Quarter) occupies the zone between the south wall and Praza Magdalena, where a house once served as the

community synagogue. The Casa da Inquisición fronts nearby Praza de García Boente. The coats of arms on its façade belonged to the Ribadavia families who served as local officials for the Inquisition.

Of several churches, the Romanesque Igrexa de Santiago and Igrexa de San Xoán stand out. The Museo Etnolóxico (admission €2.40; h 9.30am-2.30pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun), just down the street from the Igrexa de Santiago, with its Galician folk history collection, is worth a look, too. The remains of the Castelo dos Condes de Ribadavia date from the 15th century.

Ribadavia stages Galicia's biggest wine festival, the Ferial del Vino del Ribeiro, in late April and early May.

Hostal Plaza (☎ 988 47 05 76; Praza Maior; s/d €20/30; mains €5-10) has well-kept rooms with tub, TV and balcony, and one of the old town's better restaurants. There are many inviting stone-walled tapas bars on and around Praza Maior.

La Tafona de Herminia (Travesía Porta Nova de Arriba 2) is one of several little bakeries selling poppy-seed cookies and other traditional Jewish pastries.

Up to 10 buses and five trains run daily to Ourense and Vigo from stations in the east of town, just over Río Avia.

THE EAST

With the notable exception of the well-trodden Camino de Santiago, Galicia's deep interior is little visited, but full of intriguing small towns and villages and beautiful green countryside, and so perfect for travellers who like digging out their own hidden gems. Lugo's superbly preserved Roman walls encircle a stunningly beautiful old city, but nothing human-made can match the natural splendour of the Cañón do Sil (Sil Canyon; p574).

OURENSE

pop 107,000

Ourense (Castilian: Orense) may well be the first Galician city encountered by travellers arriving from neighbouring Castilla y León. First impressions are of an unexciting sprawl of apartment blocks, but at Ourense's core is a wonderful old town bursting with life.

History

Ourense was a Roman settlement of some importance. The Visigoths raised a cathedral here,

but the Muslims destroyed it during several raids. Repopulated by Sancho II of Castilla in 1071, the town eventually took off as a trade centre. Ourense's considerable Jewish population, having contributed generously to the campaign against Granada, was promptly rewarded in 1492 with expulsion. Essentially an ecclesiastical town, Ourense declined for centuries until the arrival of the railway in 1882.

Orientation

The train station is 500m north of Río Miño and the bus station a further 1km northwest. On foot you can approach the city centre across Ponte Romano, which is actually a medieval bridge constructed in place of an older Roman one. Head for Catedral do San Martiño, around which the old town unfolds.

Information

For banks, look along Rúa do Paseo and Rúa Curros Enríquez.

Ciber Eclipse (Rúa Monte Cabeza de Manzaneda 2; per hr €2; h 9am-midnight) Coin-operated Internet access.

Municipal tourist office (☎ 988 36 60 64; www.our.ense.es in Spanish; Rúa As Burgas 12; h 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat & Sun)

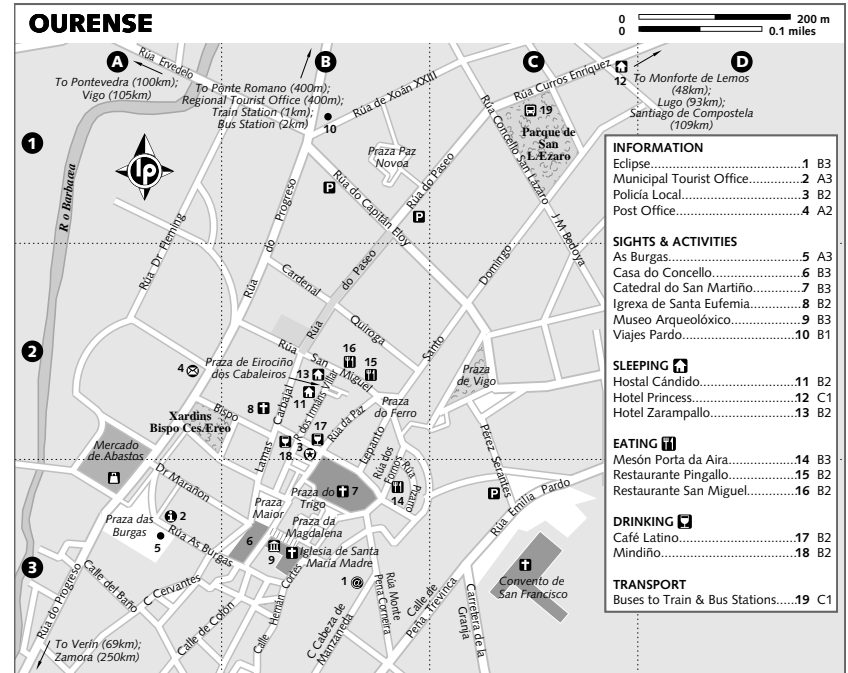
Policia Local (☎ 988 39 17 00; Praza de San Martiño 1) Post office (Rúa do Progreso)

Regional tourist office (☎ 988 37 20 20; h 9am or 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm & 5-7pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-2pm & 4.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep-mid-Jun) On the Ponte Romano.

Sights

The most singular feature of the rather gloomy 13th-century Catedral do San Martiño is the Pórtico do Paraíso at the west end, a Gothic copy of Santiago de Compostela's Pórtico de la Gloria. Around the cathedral spreads a web of charming little squares and alleyways, inviting exploration by day or night. The sloping Praza Maior is the grandest plaza, hemmed in by arched walkways. At one end of the plaza are the dignified Casa do Concello (Town Hall) and, next door, Ourense's Museo Arqueolóxico (Archaeological Museum), which has been closed for renovations for years. About 100m northwest of the cathedral stands the Igrexa de Santa Eufemia, with a magnificent concave façade that is an archetypal example of Gallego baroque.

As Burgas, Ourense's steaming mineral waters, have been a blessing for the sick, tired and sore-footed since at least Roman times. They still gush out in fountains in Praza das Burgas.



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Sleeping

Hostal Cándido (☎ 988 22 96 07; Rúa dos Irmáns Villar 15; s/d €22/33) On a small plaza 100m north of Praza Maior, this budget choice above a *chocolateria* (chocolate shop) offers worn-at-the-edges accommodation.

Hotel Zarampallo (☎ 988 22 00 53; www.zarampallo.com in Spanish; Rúa dos Irmáns Villar 19; s €30, d €45-50) A small and stylish city-centre hotel, run by the same family since the 1940s, the Zarampallo features elegant, pink-toned rooms (all exterior) and its own good restaurant.

Hotel Princess (☎ 988 26 95 38; hprincess@wanadoo.es; Avenida de la Habana 45; s/d €72/95; a i w) A bit chintzy but with professional and amiable service, this is a good option if you're after more comfort.

Eating

The streets and squares around Catedral do San Martiño are bursting with restaurants and watering holes.

Mesón Porta da Aira (☎ 988 25 07 49; Rúa dos Fornos 2; dishes €7-14; h closed Mon & 2nd half Sep) Just one of several enticing bars along this street, the Mesón Porta da Aira has locals flocking

in for the generous platters of *huevos rotos*, lightly fried eggs over a bed of thinly sliced potatoes, served alongside various sausages, steaks and chops.

Restaurante Pingallo (☎ 988 22 00 57; Rúa San Miguel 6; mains €6-12) *Lacón con grelos* (boiled pork shoulder with greens) is one of the traditional favourites available daily at this longstanding establishment with a small open-air patio.

Restaurante San Miguel (☎ 988 22 07 95; Rúa San Miguel 12; mains €15-23) The spiffiest place in the centre, the San Miguel offers a big range of vegetable, fish and meat dishes and hundreds of wines. Cooking is trad Galician with a few innovative touches.

Drinking & Entertainment

Rúa Pizarro and neighbouring lanes are awash with late-opening bars and pubs purveying a multitude of musical styles. The Igrexa Santa Eufemia vicinity has a few more refined locales, including **Mindiño** (☎ 988 24 55 36; Rúa Arce-diagos 13) playing Celtic music, and **Café Latino** (☎ 988 22 67 21; Rúa Coronel Ceano Vivas 7), which hosts a spring jazz festival.

Getting There & Away

Ourense's bus station (☎ 988 21 60 27; Carretera de Vigo 1) has service to Galicia's main cities, with at least four daily departures to Santiago de Compostela (€9.20, two hours). Daily buses also go to most other regions of Spain, including six to Madrid (€26 to €33, 5½ to 6½ hours). Empresa Villalón heads to Verín, where you can get connections towards Chaves in Portugal, a hub for many Portuguese destinations.

Six trains a day run to Santiago de Compostela (€6.60 to €16.20, 1½ to two hours), three continuing to A Coruña. Up to eight trains daily serve Vigo (€7.15 to €16.70, two hours), and a few go to Pontevedra, León, Madrid and Barcelona.

Getting Around

Local buses 1, 3, 6, 8 and 12 run between the train station and Parque de San Lázaro in the city centre. Buses 6 and 12 also serve the bus station.

CASTELO DE MONTERREI

The A52 southeast of Ourense crosses several low ranges on the way to Castilla y León. Outside Verín the N532 diverges south to Feces on the Portuguese border. If you have transport, it's well worth detouring to the large **Castelo de Monterrei** (admission free; h 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Wed-Sun), dating from the 14th to 17th centuries, in a commanding position just west of Verín.

CAÑÓN DO SIL

The N120 northeast of Ourense follows Río Miño, a pretty stretch but nothing compared to what's in store if you turn off east at Os Peares, where Río Sil joins the Miño. The ensuing 45km make a spectacular drive along the south bank of the Cañón do Sil (Sil Canyon) – known as the Ribeira Sacra (Sacred Riverbank) for the many monasteries set up here from the 6th century onwards by monks wanting to get right away from everything.

Twelve kilometres from Os Peares you reach a boat landing, where passenger boats of **Viajes Pardo** (☎ 988 21 51 00; www.riosil.com in Spanish; Rúa de Xoán XXIII 1, Ourense) speed up the gorge for a 1½-hour round trip (€13). At least two trips go every Saturday and Sunday from early March to early December; further trips go on weekdays from June to mid-September if there are 15 takers.

The road heads uphill here, reaching Loureiro after 4km. If you turn right (west) here, after 4km you'll reach **Santo Estevo de Ribas de Sil**. This huge monastery with three cloisters (one Romanesque, one Gothic, one Renaissance) was recently converted to a luxurious *parador*, the **Parador de Santo Estevo** (☎ 988 010 110; www.parador.es; s/d €120/150; p a i w), but is open to visitors. From here you can backtrack east and continue along the upper slopes of the gorge – a picturesque route through chestnut woods and across high, windswept heath, with many of the steep hillsides covered in vineyards.

Fourteen kilometres east of Loureiro is the village of Parada do Sil, where a 4km road leads down to the pretty little **Mosteiro de Santa Cristina** with its Romanesque church. Just 1km outside the village is the **Balcóns de Madrid**, a spectacular lookout over the canyon.

A further 16km east from Parada do Sil you reach the handsome village of **Castro Caldelas**, with great panoramas from its hilltop castle and at least three good upper-budget-range sleeping options nearby. From here you can head north to Monforte de Lemos or on eastwards towards Ponferrada in Castilla y León.

MONFORTE DE LEMOS

pop 19,000 / elevation 363m
Inhabited before the Romans appeared and later converted into the medieval **Mons Forti**, this somewhat dishevelled but interesting place, northeast of Ourense, has been Galicia's principal rail junction since 1883.

Long before you reach the centre of town you'll see the **Torre da Homenaxe** (☎ 982 40 47 15; admission €1.20; h noon-1.30pm & 4-6.30pm Fri, 11am-2pm & 4-8pm Sat & Sun, by appointment Tue-Thu), the 30m-tall keep of the 13th-century castle on top of the hill the town is built around. The adjacent **Mosteiro de San Vicente do Pino** is now the sumptuous **Parador de Monforte de Lemos** (☎ 982 41 84 84; www.parador.es; s/d €120/150; p a i s w). If you're not staying here, have a drink in the lovely three-storey cloister.

The area south of Monforte de Lemos' town centre is dominated by the proud **Colexio de Nosa Señora da Antiga** (Colexio dos Escolapios), erected by Cardinal Rodrigo de Castro in 1593. A pair of El Greco paintings highlights its art gallery (admission by guided tour free; h consult tourist office for schedules). Nearby is the **municipal tourist office** (☎ 982 40 47 15; h 10am-2pm & 4-7pm).

For budget accommodation, head for the 16th-century bridge over Río Cabe. **Hotel Puente Romano** (☎ 982 41 11 67; www.hpuenteromano.com in Spanish; Paseo do Malecón; s/d €27/42) and its adjacent **Hostal Puente Romano** (s/d €16.50/26), as well as **Hotel El Castillo** (☎ 982 40 21 50; Rúa das Hortas 36; s/d €25/35; p) along the street, all have many rooms with river views. Their prices reflect their relative comfort levels. A good bet for meals nearby is **La Polar** (☎ 982 40 00 01; Rúa do Cardenal 13; mains €6-11), a nice, informal joint with dozens of dinner options and tables on a pedestrian street.

Many trains crossing Galicia call in here. Buses head north to Lugo and southwest to Ourense about once an hour on weekdays, and a few travel east to Ponferrada and León. Both stations are north of the castle.

SAMOS

pop 2300 / elevation 532m
Drivers between Monforte and Lugo should detour – as do many pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago – to the **Mosteiro de Samos** (☎ 982 54 60 46), a grand Benedictine monastery built in Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and baroque styles over many centuries, then built

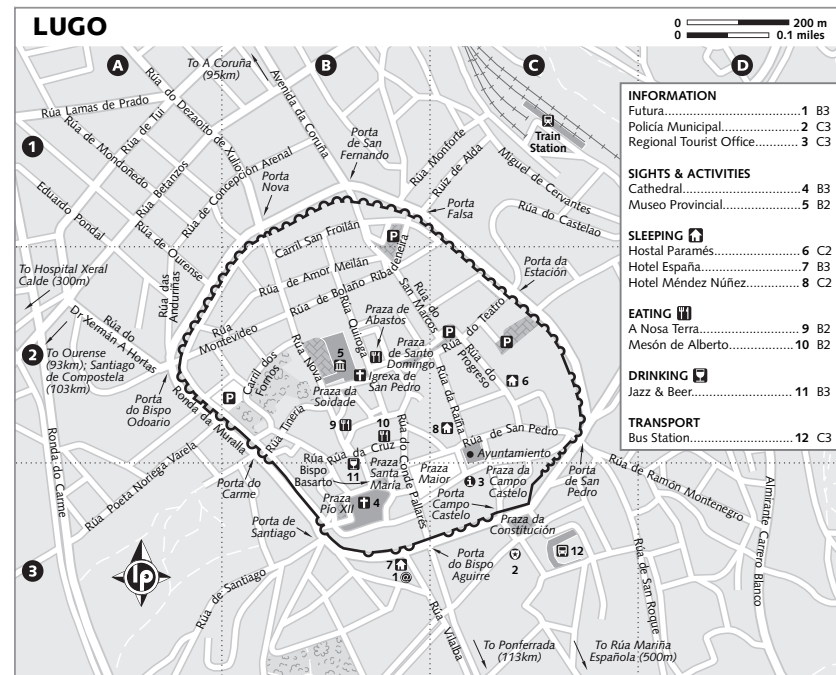
again after a disastrous fire in the 1950s. It has two lovely three-storey cloisters, an imposing 18th-century baroque church and four walls of murals detailing the life of St Benedict painted after the fire.

LUGO

pop 80,000 / elevation 475m
Lugo's impressive Roman walls are reason enough for a visit, but within them is a beautifully preserved, lively and mainly traffic-free historic centre, built in many styles over many centuries and well worthy of exploration. The Romans established **Lucus Augusti** over a *castro* in the 1st century BC. The walls went up three centuries later, but the failed to keep out the Suevi in 460, or indeed the Muslims 300 years later. Until well into the 19th century the city gates were closed at night and tolls were charged to bring in goods from outside.

Orientation & Information

Whether you arrive in Lugo by train or bus, you'll end up not too far outside the circuit of Roman walls.



Several banks and ATMs are on Rúa da Raiña and Praza de Santo Domingo.

Futura (Rúa Vilalba 6; per 15 min €0.60) Internet access.

Hospital Xeral Calde (☎ 982 29 60 00; Rúa Doutor Ochoa) About 500m west of the old town.

Policia Municipal (☎ 982 29 71 10; Praza da Constitución)

Regional tourist office (☎ 982 23 13 61; Praza Maior 27; 𠂇 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 10am-2pm & 4-8pm daily Jul & Aug) In a shopping corridor opposite the *ayuntamiento*.

Sights

ROMAN WALLS

More than 2km round, up to 15m high and studded by 82 stout turrets, the Roman walls enclosing Lugo are the best preserved of their kind in all Spain, if not the world. You can climb on top of the walls – one convenient access point is the **Porta de Santiago** (Gate of Santiago) near the cathedral – and walk all the way round the town.

CATHEDRAL

Inside the Porta de Santiago, the cathedral, with its symmetrical façade, might not at first glance seem that ancient, but it was in fact begun in 1129, inspired by the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. Work continued until the 14th century and the neoclassical front was added later still. The northern doorway, which is protected by a formidable portico, remains obviously Romanesque. In an oval frame amid the archway is a majestically seated figure of Christ; beneath his feet, a Last Supper scene has been carved into an unsupported capital. Inside, the walnut choir stalls are a baroque masterpiece.

MUSEO PROVINCIAL

Lugo's museum (☎ 982 24 21 12; Praza da Soidade; admission free; 𠂇 11am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat Jul & Aug, 10.30am-2pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun Sep-Jun; ♾) includes what remains of the Convento de San Francisco – a Gothic cloister and the convent kitchen and refectory. The collections range from pre-Roman gold jewellery and Roman mosaics to Galician art from the 15th to 20th centuries.

Sleeping

Just two lodgings are within Lugo's walls.

Hostal Paramés (☎ 982 22 62 51; Rúa do Progreso 28; s/d €18/28) This humble choice is on a quiet street. The front rooms, with *galerías*, have been modernised with good firm beds.

Hotel España (☎ 982 23 15 40; Rúa Vilalba 2; s €22-30, d €40) Outside the Porta do Bispo Aguirre, this easy-going hotel offers comfortable beds, and you might be able to bargain down the rate.

Hotel Méndez Núñez (☎ 982 23 07 11; Rúa da Raiña 1; s/d €54/70; 𠂇) Run by the same family since the 19th century, this large if not terribly exciting hotel was recently completely redone, with sturdy beds and brand-new bathrooms.

Eating

Rúa de Cruz and Rúa Nova, north of the cathedral, are packed with tempting tapas bars and restaurants.

A Nosa Terra (☎ 982 22 92 35; Rúa Nova 8; mains & raciones €5-13) The most popular of many popular spots on this street doles out good tapas (free with a drink). The downstairs bodega offers a great choice of meat, fish, seafood and *revueltos* – this is a good place to try *pulpo á feira* or *lacón con grelos*.

Mesón de Alberto (☎ 982 22 83 10; Rúa da Cruz 4; tapas €2.50-8, mains €16-25; 𠂇 closed Tue evening & Sun) The place for fab trad Galician tucker. The *menú de la tapería* (€13) lets you sample two of its original tapas, plus wine and dessert: try the chocolate or cream-filled crêpes. There's a more formal restaurant upstairs.

Drinking & Entertainment

Lugo has a relatively subdued nightlife area around the cathedral, with half a dozen pubs offering a varied musical menu, including the self-explanatory **Jazz & Beer** (☎ 982 25 09 51; Rúa Bispo Basurto 2). **Chundas** (electronica dance clubs) are strung along Rúa Mariña Española, south of the walls.

Getting There & Away

From the bus station (☎ 982 22 39 85), Empresa Freire runs at least five buses daily to/from Santiago de Compostela (€6.40, 1½ to two hours), and Arriva offers direct service up to 12 times daily to A Coruña (€7.65 to €8.40, 1¼ hours).

Around six buses a day head to Monforte de Lemos, Ourense, Pontevedra, Vigo, Mondoñedo, Viveiro and Ribadeo. ALSA serves León and Madrid (€30 to €47, 5½ to seven hours), as well as Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country.

Three or more daily trains run northwest to A Coruña (€6.05 to €14.10, two hours) and south to Monforte de Lemos (€3.60 to €10.90, one hour). One or two continue across Castilla y León to Madrid or Barcelona.

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