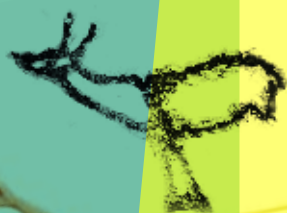




MOTOR TOURING

Cantabria



Cantabria
Infinita

ÍNDICE

Sharing roads	3
Route maps around Cantabria	4
Roads of Liébana	6
Driving along the river Nansa	11
From Suances to San Vicente de la Barquera	16
Roads of Cabuérniga	20
Rolling along the valley of the Besaya	24
On the road around Campoo and Valderredible	28
Around Santander	32
Pas, Miera and Pisueña	36
Coast of Tasmiera.....	40
El Alto Asón from Colindres.....	44
From Laredo to Laredo through Castro and Ampuero	48
Useful information.....	51

MOTOR TOURING. CANTABRIA

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On the right track

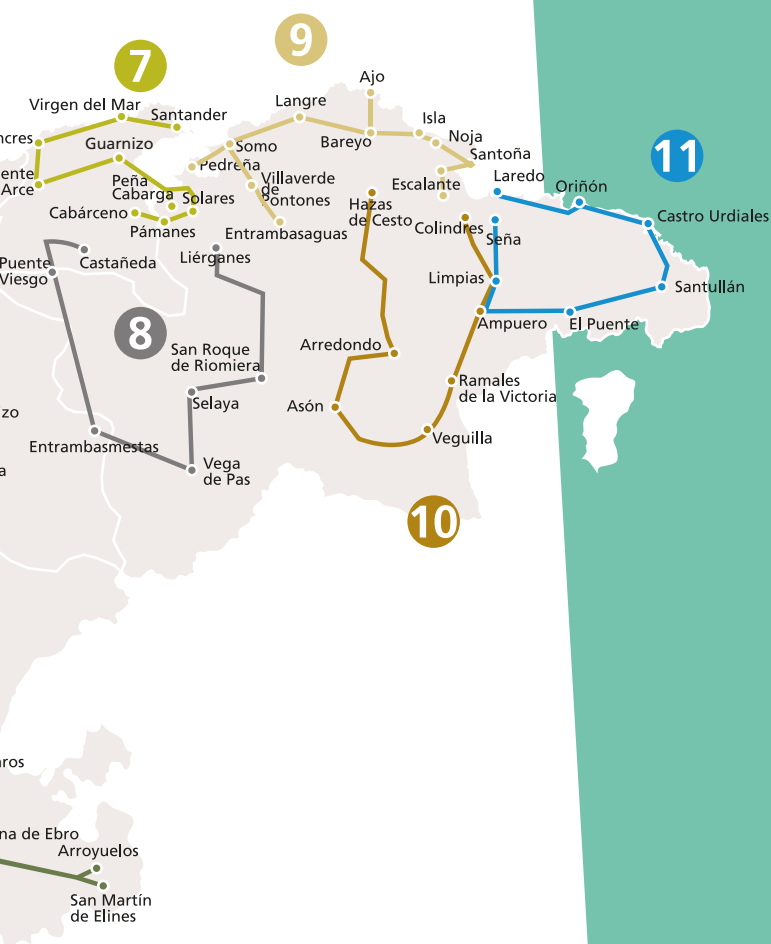
The best way to discover a place is by exploring its roads to enjoy its natural beauty, learn about its historical heritage, talk with its people and share its gastronomy. Cantabria is a region that offers plentiful attractions for travellers. They appear before our eyes on every stretch of the wide and modern motorways, and on the winding roads that pass through villages and natural landscapes. This guide proposes a tour around Cantabria with 11 driving routes, from the dramatic coastal cliffs to the foothills of the Picos de Europa mountain range, which allow us to make a journey into the uniqueness and diversity of this endless land: long beaches, hidden coves, fishing towns, intense green meadows, forests that are the source of fairy tales, high mountains nestling hamlets that keep alive the ancestors' way of life, a rich historical and artistic heritage, traditional flavours, and so on. It all brings an invitation to dive into the adventure of discovering a unique territory and comfortably enjoy the best of Cantabria.

The following pages tour around the districts of Liébana, the valleys of Nansa and Lamasón, the West Coast, Cabuérniga, the basins of the rivers Pas and Besaya, the districts of Campoo and Valderredible, the valleys of Pas, Pisueña and Miera, Trasmiera, the valleys of Asón and Soba, the East Coast and Santander.



ON ROUTE

around Cantabria





ROADS

of Liébana

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 90 Km.

Bordered by the Cordillera Cantábrica and the Picos de Europa mountain ranges, between these two towering massifs, lies the incomparable district of Liébana that boasts some truly spectacular scenery. The remarkable geographic uniqueness of this district is underscored by the distinguishable features of its weather and flora, which set Liébana apart from the rest of the region. Among its greatest attractions stand out the true character of its villages, and the richness of its historical and artistic heritage that include some quite interesting elements. This route runs right through deep ravines and along middle mountain roads, connecting the sea and the summits of the Picos de Europa.

Unquera. This town draws the line between Asturias and Cantabria, bounded by the Tina Mayor estuary, which is the outlet of the river Deva. Unquera is an obligatory stop to taste its “corbatas,” a famous pastry speciality, as well as elvers, when in season. The N-621 starts off from here and leads us, after driving a short distance into Asturian territory, back to Cantabria towards Liébana.

The defile of La Hermida is an impressive 20-km ravine that serves as a natural gateway to Liébana, formed by the continuous flow of the river Deva over the limestone rocks of the Picos de Europa, and which in some stretches reaches down up to a depth of 600 metres. From Urdón, in the defile, begins the steep mountain trail, locally known as “subida de Urdón a Tresviso,” that ends in the village of Tresviso, renowned for its Picón cheese. Not too far from La Hermida, the CA-282 departs towards Lamasón valley and, in the opposite direction, another road towards Bejes, which shares with Tresviso the protected designation of origin “Bejes-Tresviso cheeses.”

Lebeña. Shortly after leaving the gorge behind, we find the small hamlet of Lebeña, which lies on the riverside of the Deva. This settlement hosts one of the architectural gems of Cantabria, the Mozarabic church of Santa María, which dates from the 10th century.

Piasca. In Ojedo, this route pulls away from the N-621 and takes the CA-184 for about 8 kilometres, passing through the villages of Frama and Cabezón de Liebana, until we take the CA-872 that eventually ends in Piasca. This village preserves one of the most important architectural Romanesque landmarks in Cantabria: the double monastery of Santa María.



Church of Santa María de Lebeña



Bejes-Tresviso's Picón cheese

Potes. Potes. At this stage, we must go back part of the way down to Ojedo, so as to take again the N-621, but this time towards Potes, one of the “Most beautiful villages in Spain” and the capital of the district. Both towers, Torre del Infantado and Torre de Orejón de la Lama, stand out. From the latter, after crossing the bridge over the river Quiviesa, we get to Barrio Viejo, characterised by its strong medieval flavour. Throughout the village, mansions and popular houses invite the visitors to lose themselves around its nooks and alleys.





When you arrive in Liébana, it doesn't matter what road you choose: all of them are bound to drive you along breathtaking landscapes.



Santo Toribio de Liébana. This route begins from Potes, on the CA-185. Within less than a kilometre, we reach the turn-off that leads to the monastery of Santo Toribio. This Gothic building holds the Lignum Crucis, the biggest piece of Jesus Christ's Cross and, like Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela, is a destination for pilgrims that celebrates the Jubilee Year.

Mogrovejo. Our route comes back to the CA-185 until we reach the turn-off to the CA-887 to go towards Mogrovejo, one of the prettiest and best preserved villages of Liébana.

Fuente Dé. After going back to the CA-185, the route returns to the way towards Fuente Dé, passing through Los Llanos, Cosgaya, Las Ilces and Espinama, from where a track starts off climbing all the way up to the mountain passes of Áliva, into the very heart of the Picos de Europa. Continuing on the same road, about 4 kilometres farther, we will be greeted with an astonishing view of Fuente Dé, an ancient glacier at which edge rises the solid central massif of the Picos de Europa. The cable car station sits at the foot of the mountain. Bridging the 800-metre drop, within a distance of just over 1.5 kilometres, the cable car reaches the upper station. It is located at an altitude of 1,850 metres and boasts a magnificent view of a beautiful landscape.

Gastronomy

Liébana's gastronomy somewhat benefits from its microclimate. The two traditional cheeses, the so-called "Quesucos de Liébana" and the "Picón Bejes-Tresviso"—both registered as a Protected Designation of Origin—as well as the wild boar and venison dry-cured sausages, are a must-try. The most traditional dish is the cocido lebaniego stew, made with chickpeas. Moreover, Liébana produces honey, pulses, excellent fruit, nuts and its well-known orujo brandy. Most of these products are available in the traditional farmers' market that is held every Monday in Potes. This market is a meeting point for the locals and the main outlet for selling local products to visitors.



Cocido Lebaniego stew

DRIVING

along the river Nansa

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 50 Km

This route runs throughout the beautiful landscapes of the basin of the river Nansa, featured in the novel “Peñas Arriba” by Cantabrian-born writer José María de Pereda, who depicted local customs and manners. The river Nansa is fed by several springs and streams which have their source on the hillsides of the sierras of Peña Labra and Peña Sagra. It flows through stunning landscapes to empty into the sea, in Pesués, which is close to the estuary of Tina Menor. Vast oak and beech forests, villages teeming with stately mansions and a superb local gastronomy accompany the visitor throughout this journey.

Pesués. The starting point of this route begins with an astonishing view of the estuary of Tina Menor, the river Nansa’s mouth, which flows through the coastal hills and boasts a magnificent view from the high point Alto de Pechón.

Cades. In Pesués we take the CA-181, and the course of the river Nansa will lead us to Cades, in the municipality of Herrerías, which preserves an ancient blacksmith’s forge dating the 18th century. It has been rebuilt and turned into a museum to show its visitors what the old forges and the craft of the blacksmith were like. Back then it was a trade of great importance in the Saja-Nansa district.



El Soplao cave. Continuing southwards, the route takes us to the junction of Puente El Arrudo and, not too far ahead, we reach the village of Rábago that leads to El Soplao cave and to Riclones—from where the Chufín cave, a World Heritage Site, is accessible.

Puentenansa. This route climbs upwards to the municipality of Rionansa, passing through its capital, Puentenansa, a junction from where it is possible to drive eastwards to the valleys of Carmona and Cabuérniga, or westwards to Lamasón, on the hillside of Peña Sagra. It continues southwards on the C-281 until it reaches the village of Cosío, where the river Vendul merges into the river Nansa. This village is adorned with stories of nobility and mansions belonging to indianos, wealthy returnees from America, created by the melancholic mood of their dwellers.

Here, leaving the road to take the CA-86O, we arrive at San Sebastián de Garabandal, renowned for its Marian apparitions.

Tudanca. The CA-281 enters into the municipality of Tudanca, passing through Sarceda and Santotís before reaching its capital: Tudanca. This village has been declared of Cultural Interest due to its traditional mountain-style architecture. A remarkable sight is the José María de Cossío Mansion-Museum, whose library keeps valuable manuscripts by José María de Pereda, a copy of “The Family of Pascual Duarte” by Camilo José



Tudanca cow





Cela, as well as some translations by Manuel Azaña and a whole collection of poems handwritten by the authors themselves.

La Cruz de Cabezuela. On the hillside of Peña Labra, very near the boundary with Liébana, there is a viewpoint, known as La Cruz de Cabezuela, that offers a stunning panorama of the Picos de Europa, the valleys of Liébana and the Cantabrian peaks of Peña Labra, Corisco or Peña Prieta. This viewpoint is surrounded by vast beech and oak forests.



El Soplao cave

Cantabria, which has over 6,500 documented natural cavities, is internationally renowned for its speleological wealth.

El Soplao cave, which stretches between the municipalities of Valdáliga, Herrerías and Rionansa, can be accessed from Rábago and is one of its best examples, fully accessible for all visitors. The cave and mine complex is accessible by a mine train and offers three types of tours. The first one is a 1.2-km walk on a walkway free from any architectural barriers. The second one is a “caving adventure,” whose length varies according to the characteristics of the group and which welcomes participants from 12 and above. And lastly, the “mine Via Ferrata”—only available for those over 16—that traverses in its entirety through the deepest reaches of the mine. The cave features eccentric formations of fascinating crystallization, stalactites, stalagmites, flow stones, “nests of pearls” or pisolites.

El Soplao





FROM SUANCES

to San Vicente de la Barquera

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 36 Km

This stretch of the Cantabrian coast is an excellent example of how the sea and the countryside intertwine, featuring vast pasturelands and gently rolling hills, alternating with coves, beaches and fishing harbours. Even though there is a faster way, by taking the wide motorway that runs along the coastline, some of its best attractions can be enjoyed driving through convenient secondary roads. This route tours across rural scenery, flanked by ever-steeper sierras on the roads going inland, and by beautiful cliffs along the seacoast.

Suances. This route begins in the seaside town of Suances, a leading tourist destination in the area thanks to its beaches. We take the CA-351 that passes through the villages of Tagle and Ubiarco. The latter belongs to the municipality of Santillana del Mar, and there lies the beach of Santa Justa that takes its name after the chapel that sits on its rocky cliff to honour this Saint.

Suances



Chapel of Santa Justa



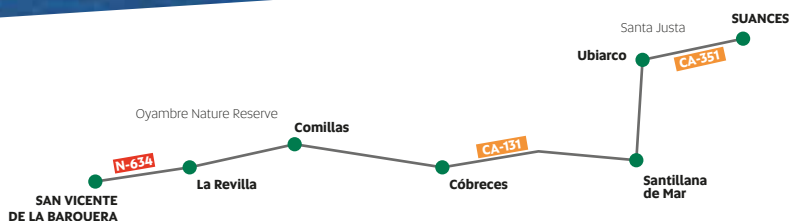
Santillana del Mar

Santillana del Mar. The road, climbing all the way up between meadows until it reaches a viewpoint overlooking the stunning views of the nearby cliffs, leads us to Santillana del Mar. This medieval settlement is a Historic-Artistic Ensemble—included among the “Most beautiful villages in Spain”—that has become one of the most important cultural centres in Cantabria. The village is structured around several centres with well-defined functions, such as the square of the Arenas dominated by the Collegiate Church; the Ramón Pelayo square, originally the Market square, which is dominated by the towers of Merino and Don Borja; as well as the Town Hall and the area of the Regina Coeli and San Ildefonso convents. From there, turning off to the CA-133 and 134, we reach the National Museum and Research Centre of Altamira.

Cóbreces. The route continues through the CA-131 towards Cóbreces, a coastal village that not only boasts the beautiful beach of Luaña, but also comprises several neighbourhoods that feature some mountain-style mansions from the 18th century and also some interesting religious buildings. Among them, the Cistercian Abbey of Santa María de Viaceli, built in 1908, may be highlighted, as well as its delicious “Trapa” cow’s milk cheese that can be bought on site.



Monastery of Viaceli. Cóbreces



Comillas. Our route reaches Comillas, which is also a Historic-Artistic Ensemble. This town—that would serve as a royal retreat in the summer-time—has an old quarter that concentrates buildings of great architectural value, such as the Palace of Sobrellano, the Pontifical University, along with Gaudí’s El Capricho. Its small harbour, surrounded by traditional taverns, still keeps its fishing activity.

San Vicente de la Barquera. The CA-131 passes now through the Oyambre Nature Reserve until it arrives at La Revilla, where the N-634 crosses over the estuary to San Vicente de la Barquera, a town mostly dedicated to seafaring and fishing. It boasts a great variety of beaches, each one of them with its own personality: El Merón, a large stretch of sand; Gerra or Santillán, beaches spreading out beneath rugged cliffs; and El Sable, a little beach bathed by the still waters of the estuary of San Vicente. Among the architectural heritage of this town, it is worth visiting its Puebla Alta, designated as a Historic-Artistic Ensemble, where there are some remarkable buildings, such as the 14th-century castle and the Gothic church of Santa María de los Ángeles.

Oyambre Nature Reserve. This area, designated as a Nature Reserve in 1988, is one of the prettiest on the Cantabrian coastline. Its 5,000 hectares spread along the municipalities of San Vicente de la Barquera, Valdáliga and Comillas. The Oyambre Nature Reserve is particularly outstanding



for its biodiversity and varied landscapes, where all the different ecosystems of the Cantabrian coast are represented. Among them there are two estuaries, the estuary of San Vicente de la Barquera and the estuary of La Raba, which stand out for their beauty and pristine conservation of the natural environment. Within this park we can also find clusters of



Oyambre Beach

beaches and dunes in the sandy areas of Oyambre and Merón, along with some cliffs, meadows and small rural settlements.



Gaudi's Capricho. Comillas.

ROADS

of Cabuérniga

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: **30 Km**

This route overlaps with the so-called "Route of the Foramontanos," which is named after the path used by the Cantabrians when, following the Spanish Reconquista, they left the mountains to repopulate the lands of Castile. The whole area is an extensive woodland with a variety of ever-changing hues. There are large areas of hazelnuts, birches, willows, oaks, beeches and elms, among other tree species, along with small villages scattered around, characterised by their traditional stone mansions, fitted with glazed and open balconies.



Cabezón de la Sal.

The giant sequoia wood of Monte Cabezón is the first landmark of this route. This Natural Monument is the largest woodland of its kind in Europe, composed of this tree species that can reach heights of up to 50 metres. Regarding the town of Cabezón de La Sal, named after its ancient Roman salt mines, it preserves a fair number of old streets and traditional dwellings that are a must-see.

Carrejo. Carrejo. This small village sits on the edge of the road and is distinguished by its large number of mountain-style mansions. One of them, the mansion-palace of Los Haces, hosts the Cantabria Nature Museum. Our route takes us to the bridge of Santa Lucía over the river Saja, and runs through the meadows and woodlands of Cabuérniga.

Ucieda. After taking a short detour from the CA-180, the route goes into Ucieda, a village made up of three neighbourhoods full of traditional mansions and mountain-style palaces. Driving along a forest trail, our route passes through the deep mountains of the Saja-Besaya Nature Reserve.

Ruente. We are back on the CA-180, which leads us to Ruente, the main village of the municipality that has the same name. Ruente preserves an outstanding architectural ensemble, of which the



Cocido montañés
(mountain stew)



La Fuentona. Ruente



Source of La Fuentona.
Ruente

mansion of Mier and the mansion of Nogalera are its more salient buildings. In this same village, we can find “La Fuentona,” a natural spring flowing out of a cave and forming a brook that runs throughout the village and which is crossed by a unique eight-arched bridge.

Carmona. In the village of Valle, we take the CA-182 and, going through the mountain pass of Collada de Carmona, we arrive at its namesake village, which has been designated as a Historic-Artistic Ensemble. Both its streets and neighbourhoods maintain a certain uniformity in their buildings, featuring the traditional mansions of this region, many of which display a family coat of arms on their façade. The arches composed of ashlar blocks

and the glazed balconies decorated with flowers complete the sight of this hamlet, one of the “Most beautiful villages in Spain,” among which it is also ranked our next stopover, **Bárcena Mayor**. To get here, we must retrace our steps to Valle and then take the CA-280 that passes through the villages of Terán, Selores, Renedo and Fresneda to drive into the valley of Saja. Now we turn off along the CA-817 to Bárcena Mayor. This hamlet sits on the banks of the river Argoza, which is crossed by an old stone bridge. It still retains the same rustic atmosphere of its ancient origin, which is said to be dated back to the 9th century, and has a singular, dense architectural complex.



Architectre of Cabuérniga

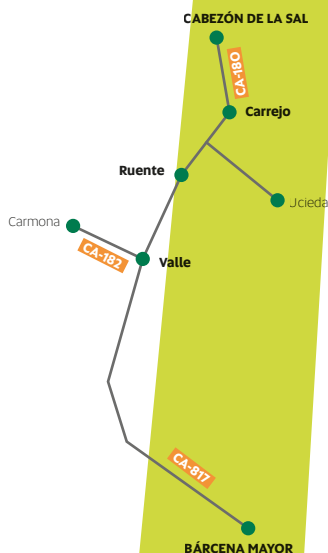
Architectural ensembles with a rather distinctive and consistent representation of the traditional buildings of the region are spread all over the valley. In every one of them, stately homes-mansions alternate with more popular dwellings, reflecting an adaptation to the population's way of living.

By and large, the more popular type of architecture is characterised by two-storey houses that have a hall on the ground floor and a glazed balcony on the upper floor. As for the larger mansions, with façades displaying the family coat of arms and a large open balcony, they are characterised by including a space for carriages. Attractive mansions with blazons and open balconies can be found in Renedo, Selores, Valle... And certainly in Carmona.



Bárcena Mayor

The architectural ensemble of Bárcena Mayor is an excellent example of the houses of the common people in the area. All this traditional buildings are made of ashlar blocks and oak wood.



ROLLING

along the valley of the Besaya

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 50 Km.

This route begins in Torrelavega, the capital of the valley of Besaya and the second most important city in Cantabria. We take the N-611 towards Reinosa, which will be the final destination of this itinerary. Nearly at the end of the journey, we go through Las Hoces, a stretch that runs between mountains; its surroundings and winding route are a delight to visitors. This road has a long history of regular traffic from the times of the Roman occupation. This is illustrated by the remains of the Roman road, still preserved, and which is one of its main attractions. Many examples of the Romanesque are spread along the route. Some of them are considered to be very significant exponents of this style, which is why this route is called the Route of the Romanesque.

Cartes. Soon after leaving Torrelavega behind, on the N-611, we get to the town of Cartes, following what it is known as the “Camino Real” (Royal Road) that used to connect Santander with the Castilian plateau. It is a town with a relevant past, a Historic-Artistic Ensemble where we can find towers, balconies with turned balusters, arches and family coats of arms. Its peculiar atmosphere served as setting of the novel “Marianela,” written by Benito Pérez Galdós, a regular visitor to Santander.



Cartes



Riocorvo. Small village similarly on the “Camino Real” and with much the same characteristics as the previous one: houses from the 17th and 18th centuries arranged around one main road.

Santa María de Yermo. By turning off to the CA-283, after a few kilometres we find the church of Santa María de Yermo, which was one the oldest monasteries in the region. The 13th-century church is the first of a series of Romanesque monuments located around the N-611.

San Felices de Buelna. By taking the CA-170 in Barros and driving to San Felices de Buelna, we find the medieval tower of Pero Niño and the World Heritage cave of Hornos de la Peña.

Bostronizo. You can reach it by turning off to the CA-706. In this village, hidden among hills, rises the Mozarab chapel of San Román de Moroso.

Arenas de Iguña. Another Romanesque church, San Juan Raicedo.

Silió. Silió is another village that can be reached by taking the turn-off from the N-611 and then following the CA-712. Here we can visit the museum of La Vijanera, which hosts its peculiar carnival outfits, the carnival being one of the most traditional and deep-rooted festivities in Cantabria. It takes place on the first Sunday of the year and has been designated a Festival of National Touristic Interest.



La Vijanera carnival: Silió



Bárcena de Pie de Concha.

This village, which can be reached by taking again the N-611, offers a beautiful walk. The Romanesque church of San Cosme and San Damián, as well as the Roman road that goes to Pesquera are its highlights.



Church of Cervatos

Cervatos. Leaving Reinosa behind, we arrive at our final destination. In Cervatos we can see the collegiate church of San Pedro, one of the most valued Romanesque monuments in the region, a landmark in the “Route of the Besaya,” which is part of the Pilgrims’ Route to Santiago. The decoration on the front is to be highlighted, with its archivolt and capitals representing animal figures and its corbels depicting imagery of the sins of the flesh.



Church of San Juan de Raicedo.
Arenas de Iguña

Roman road

Roman roads were fundamental in the organisation of the Roman Empire. One of the most important in Cantabria runs along the valley of the Besaya, where some stretches still remain today. It connected the city of Julióbriga, located in the valley of Campoo and the hub of Roman Cantabria, with Portus Blendium, which is now the town of Suances. Nowadays, the 5 km-stretch between Somaconcha and Pie de Concha is the most accessible. It is walkable and goes through beautiful natural landscapes.



Roman road

ON THE ROAD AROUND

Campoo and Valderredible

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 80 Km.

The districts of Campoo and Valderredible form an exuberant natural and scenic landscape. Their historical remains, such as the Roman road or the ruins of the city of Julióbriga, coexist with modern tourist attractions, such as the Alto Campoo Ski Resort or the enjoyment of nature and water sports on the Ebro Reservoir.

Fontibre. The source of the fastest-flowing river in Spain, the Ebro, is the symbolic starting point of this route. From there, along the CA-183, we arrive at Reinosa, the capital of the district of Campoo. From there we take the N-611, and then soon turn off to follow the CA-730 that leads to Retortillo.

Julióbriga. In Retortillo we find the ruins of the city of Julióbriga, the most important settlement built by the Romans in Cantabria. The place has an attractive interpretation centre, the “Domus,”

Roman ruins of Julióbriga. Retortillo

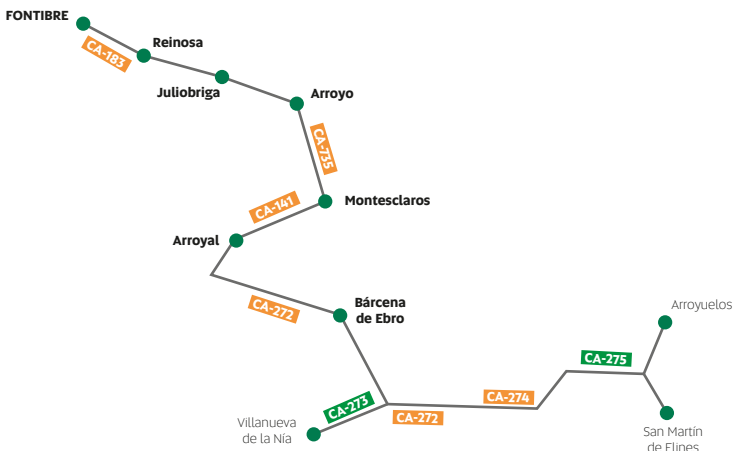




where a Roman house has been recreated in detail. Continuing along the same road, we get to the small village of Arroyo, located on the banks of the Ebro Reservoir, the largest mass of fresh water in Cantabria.

Montesclaros. At the high point of the land, dominating the view, the sanctuary of Montesclaros, together with its guest quarters, can be found. We proceed along the CA-741 to Arroyal, and from there, along the CA-272 to Villanueva de la Nía.

Cave chapels. Following the course of the river Ebro on the CA-272 and, from Polientes, on the CA-274, we arrive at Cadalso, Arroyuelos and Santa María de Hito, hamlets where the most relevant samples of cave chapels are located. They are characteristic of the Christian repopulation that took place from the 8th to the 10th centuries. Lastly, in San Martín de Elines there is a remarkable Romanesque collegiate church.



The Ebro Reservoir

Despite its human origin, the Ebro reservoir is of great natural and scenic interest. In addition to the abundance of fish, it is of great importance to birds and is a point of reference for migration routes. Its shallow waters are used by many birds to rest and feed, and some spend the winter and breed there. Due to the high interest of the fauna, the Ebro reservoir is accredited as a National Aquatic Bird Sanctuary and hunting is forbidden on its banks.

The surroundings, formed by gently rolling mountains, oak woods and Scots pine reforestation areas, contribute to its scenic interest. In addition, its calm waters are perfect for water sports such as windsurfing, sailing, rowing or even canoeing and rafting.



Ebro Reservoir



A R O U N D

Santander

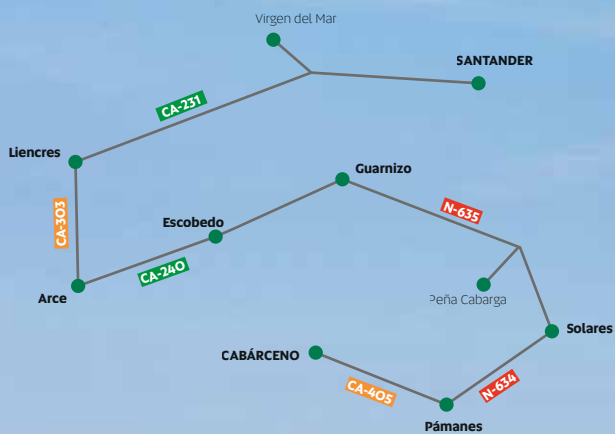


Bay of Santander. Palacio de la Magdalena

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 50 Km.

Santander, capital of Cantabria, is an excellent destination to go sightseeing. Of small size, modern and cosmopolitan, it offers its visitors a variety of thematic routes around its beaches, natural spaces, monuments, as well as cultural and leisure activities. In addition, there are interesting towns nearby offering different attractions.

La Virgen del Mar. Situated on the outskirts of Santander, it is popular due to its beach and its chapel on an inlet, dedicated to the patron saint of Santander. Take a turn-off to the right from the CA-231 as it passes through the neighbourhood of Corbán.



We are right into the Costa Quebrada Geological Park, a spectacular section of the coast extending from here to the beach of Liencres.



Arnia beach.

Liencres. Back on the CA-231, going westward, we arrive at Liencres. The sceneries around beaches such as Canallave, Valdearenas and Somocuevas are of note. Furthermore, these beaches are part of the system of dunes located at the mouth of the river Pas, an area which has been declared a Nature Reserve because of its ecological and geomorphological importance.

Arce. We get there by following the same road and connecting with the N-611 at the last moment. The town is also known as Puente Arce, after its beautiful bridge over the river Pas. The Casona de Santillán is a remarkable mansion of Historic-Artistic interest, built next to a medieval tower. Near Arce, by taking the CA-240, we reach Escobedo de Camargo. In this village we can visit El Pendo prehistoric cave, where there is a large painted panel from the Palaeolithic with depictions of animals and other signs. It is known as the “frieze of the paintings” and it is a World Heritage Site.



Peña Cabarga. We continue until we reach the village of Boo de Guarnizo and then take the N-635 to Heras. There, we turn off to the CA-412 to ascend to Peña Cabarga. From the top, there is one of the most stunning views of the bay of Santander to be enjoyed. Back on the N-635, we continue to Solares, and from there to Pámanes on the N-634. In this village, inside a splendid baroque building, we find the Museum of Modern Art of the Elsedo Palace.

Bears. Cabárceno Nature Park



Cabárceno. From Pámanes, we take the turn-off to the CA-435 to arrive at the Cabárceno Nature Park and finish the route.

Cabárceno Nature Park

The Cabárceno Nature Park is unique in its kind. It is an amazing world of nature and fantasy covering 750 hectares just 15 km away from Santander. In the spectacular landscape, where there originally was an open-pit iron mine, the most appropriate spaces have been fitted out so that animals of more than a hundred different species can be at ease, living the way that comes nearest to living in their natural habitat. In the park, scientific breeding programmes for endangered species, such as the African elephant, are successfully carried out. There are informative and educational activities taking place as well, such as the Environmental Classroom programme for school children, nature, flora and geology workshops, the “Visita Salvaje” the exhibition of sea lions and demonstrations of the flying techniques of birds of prey. Visitors can drive their own vehicles by a large network of roads to explore the park. There is also a network of trails and a cable-car installation that allow the enjoyment of some unique views over this spectacular scenery.



Peña Cabarga



PAS, MIERA

y Pisueña

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 70 Km.

Landscapes full of green meadows, high mountains and a typically rural atmosphere are the dominant features of the valleys known as Valles Pasiegos, which are mainly dedicated to livestock. Bathed by the rivers Pas, Pisueña and Miera, villages are spread out into countless huts. These valleys have a culture of their own, the Pasiego culture, still alive in many places, with traditions and customs linked to the seasonal moving of livestock. The atmosphere of peace and calm forms a contrast with the hard life in the countryside.

Castañeda. The route begins from this point, in the district of Pisueña, located in the N-634. In this municipality we find one of the most important Romanesque works in Cantabria, the collegiate church of the Holy Cross. Also on the main road, by the river, we find the Cross of Castañeda, a rustic cross that dates back to the 17th century and which is an example of many crosses to be found scattered over the region.



Puente Viesgo caves



Puente Viesgo. In the village of Vargas we take the N-623 to Puente Viesgo, a town by the river Pas where the Monte Castillo caves can be found. They are an important prehistoric site with cave paintings of the utmost interest. It has been inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There is also an important spa resort.

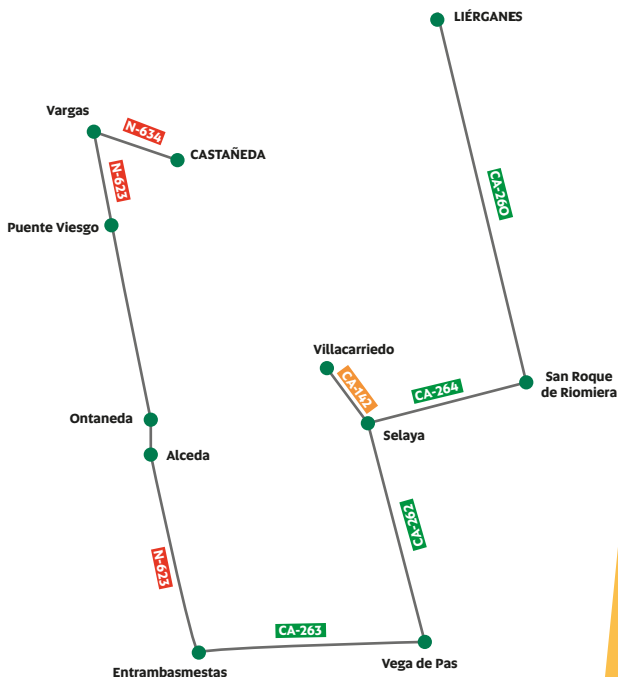
Ontaneda and Alceda. Continuing southwards, we leave behind San Vicente de Toranzo, an entrance to the splendid valley of Anievas, and reach Ontaneda and Alceda, a Historic Ensemble of emblazoned mansions.

Vega de Pas. From Entrambasmestas we take the CA-263 to Vega de Pas, capital of the municipality of the same name, where the visitor can enjoy the picturesque atmosphere of the village square, the stone-paved streets and the traditional houses. The typical products

Cabárceno Nature Park



of the local gastronomy, sobaos (typical Cantabrian sponge cakes) and quesadas (typical Cantabrian dessert), are not to be missed. Travelling along the CA-262 and going through the mountain pass called Puerto de la Braguía, we reach Selaya and Villacarriedo, two villages where civil architecture stands out, as in the mountain style mansion of Donadio and the mansion of Soñanes, with a purely baroque style.



San Roque de Riomiera.

The Lunada mountain pass, with its green meadows, steep slopes and traditional huts, is among the top attractions in the Pasiego territory. Leaving from San Roque de Riomiera, on the CA-260, we arrive at Liérganes. Included in the list of the “Most beautiful villages in Spain,” **Liérganes** is perfect for a stroll while admiring its traditional mountain architecture in the stone houses adorned with flowers and family coats of arms. The Fluviarium is an interpretation centre for the fauna and flora found in the rivers. There is a great tradition of confectionery and of having an afternoon snack of chocolate



Liérganes

Museum of the Pasiego Villages

The two storeys that make up the Museum of the Pasiego Villages—thus named because it shows the features of the villages of San Pedro del Romeral, San Roque de Riomiera and Vega de Pas—carefully recreate an “exact replica” of the old huts.

The building's layout shows the peculiarities of the seasonal livestock sheds of the area, since the valley's inhabitants have

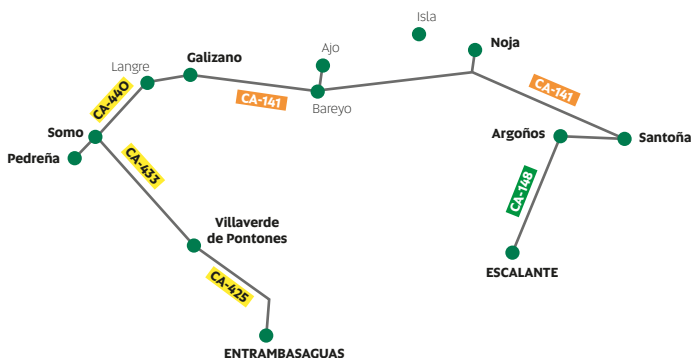
Cabañas. Vega de Pas



always been transhumant. Rooms such as the kitchen are recreated with all the distinctive utensils and its sleeping area. The museum also has a Public Library, and a Documentation Centre that exhibits a collection of literary and audio-visual documents dealing with the Pas-Miera districts and their areas of influence.

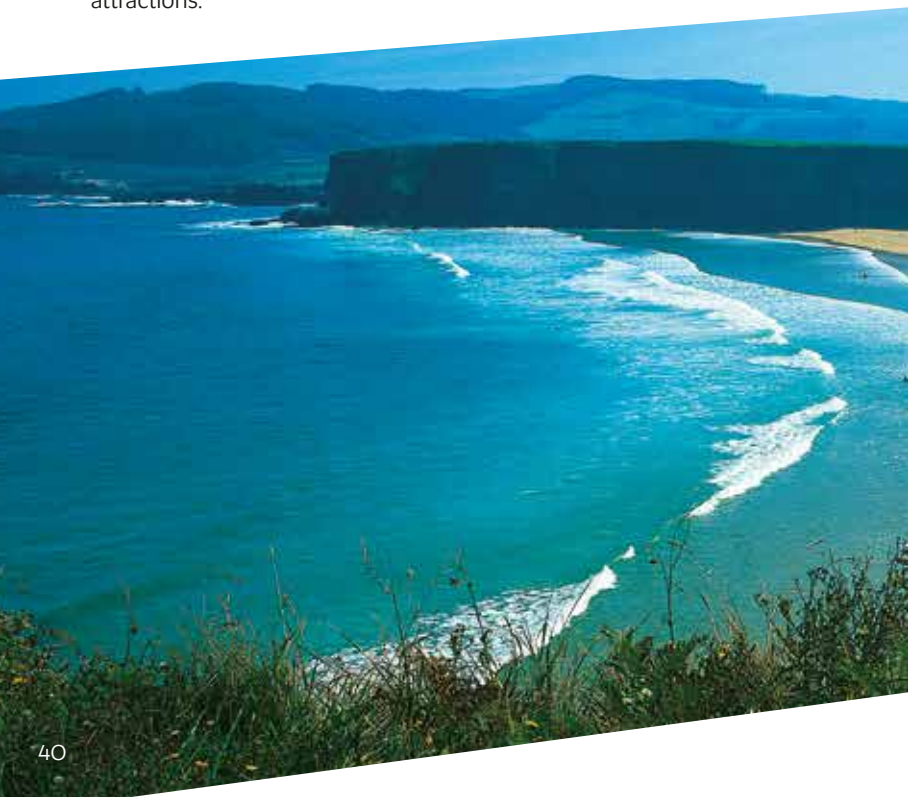
COAST

of Trasmiera



APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 85 Km.

The coast of the district of Trasmiera offers this itinerary full of sheer cliffs and plentiful sandy areas, where we can find wild beaches of great beauty, such as those of Langre and Galizano. Important summer tourist areas have flourished there, offering a variety of natural and leisure attractions.



Escalante. This village, from where the route begins, preserves an important architectural heritage, both civil and religious. At the Capuchin convent of Montehano, we find the tomb of Doña Bárbara of Blomberg, mother of Don Juan of Austria, who spent her last days in this land.

Santoña. By following the CA-148, we reach the village of Argoños, where we can visit the fishermen's quarter of Ancillo and the Tide Mill of Jado. Later on, by continuing on the same road, we arrive at Santoña, one of the fishing towns with most tradition. Its location is extraordinary, at the foot of Buciero Hill and right in the Nature Reserve of the Marshes of Santoña, Victoria and Joyel.

Noja. The CA-141 road takes to Noja, a town notable for its beaches and the cultural activities in the Palace of the Marquises of Albaicín. On the same road, and within a short distance, we find the village of Isla, which also has an outstanding 17th Century



Langre beach



Palace, known as the Palace of the Counts of Isla. Farther on, in **Ajo**, it is worth turning off to the right to see the lighthouse, and to the left, to visit the Romanesque church of Santa María de **Bareyo**. We proceed to **Galizano** and there, taking the CA-440, we get to **Langre**, a splendid sample of the traditional coastal landscape, dedicated to agriculture and livestock, with a gorgeous beach that maintains its natural value virtually intact.



Somo y Pedreña. Continuing along the CA-141, the next destination is Somo and Loreda, two villages located on the shores of the bay of Santander and connected by a long beach. It is worthwhile crossing the bridge over the Cubas estuary to reach Pedreña and visit this fishing village and the golf course where Severiano Ballesteros learned his game as a child.

Villaverde de Pontones. From Somo, along the CA-433 and then the CA-146, we get to Villaverde de Pontones, where impressive mansions, such as the one named Mazarrasa, can be gazed at. The small village of Omoño is very close by, and so is the Garma cave, which is a prehistoric World Heritage Site but cannot be visited.

Entrambasaguas. We reach this town, the end of the route, from Villaverde, along the CA-428 and the CA-425, which crosses the A-8 motorway. As it happens with the rest of the villages in the area, Entrambasaguas has a valuable civil heritage, basically consisting of mansions and palaces. Another hidden treasure is the so-called Fountain of the Frenchman, which became an important thermal spa in the 19th century. A small road leaves from very near the imposing entrance of the Carasa and Arredondo manor house towards this exquisite natural setting.



The Marshes of Santoña

The Marshes of Santoña, Victoria and Joyel are an amazing sight of natural and scenic beauty. They are a refuge of great importance for waterfowl, a paradise for birdwatchers and nature lovers. Classified as a Nature Reserve, it has an extension of 4,500 hectares and it hosts a valuable ecosystem of abundant fauna and flora. It is a vital stopover for birds migrating from northern Europe to Doñana and northern Africa. There are different birds in the reserve during winter and summer, with resident species and birds of passage only seen at certain seasons.

EL ALTO ASÓN

from Colindres

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 70 Km.

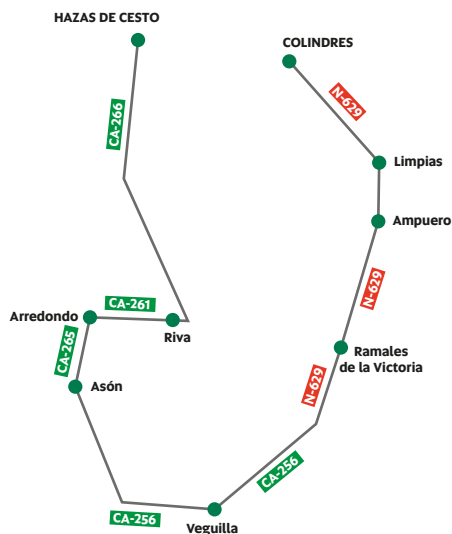
The natural landscape surrounding the valleys of Asón and Soba is a true paradise. The numerous trails, sceneries and routes offer plenty of attractions, mainly related to nature. The Collados del Asón Nature Reserve, the source of the river Gándara and its cave network are some of its differentiating elements.

Colindres. Colindres has an interesting ensemble of mansions, among them that of Doña Bárbara de Blomberg. We depart from this town taking the N-629, following the course of the river Asón.

Limpías. It has some outstanding civil architecture, the result of its prosperous and noble past, as shown by its mansions and palaces, one of them turned into a state-run tourist hotel (Parador Nacional de Turismo). As for its religious architecture, the Renaissance church of San Pedro stands out, which hosts its renown Saint Christ of the Agony.

Ampuero. Ampuero, the capital of the lower Asón is on the same road. In its immediate vicinity, more precisely in Marrón, we can find the sanctuary of the Bien Aparecida, patron saint of Cantabria, whose feast day is celebrated on the 15th of September.





Rasines. In this village there is a very old bullring which has the particularity of being square-shaped. The Masonry Museum "Rodrigo Gil de Hontañón" gives us an insight into the masonry trade in the old times.

Ramales de la Victoria. We reach it by continuing along the same road. It is worth visiting the caves of Covalanas and Cullalvera in Ramales. The route proceeds along the beautiful Soba valley, whose capital, Veguilla, is on the CA-256. The road offers impressive views of the Collados del Asón Nature Reserve, and its breathtaking curves will lead us to the source of the river Asón.

Arredondo. A popular saying claims that Arredondo is the "capital of the world," an expression originating from the great quantity of indianos (locals who migrated to the Spanish colonies in the Americas) who parted from this land. There are various examples of Indiano-style architecture.

Hazas de Cesto. The last stretch, purely scenic, runs among mountains between the villages of Riba and Hazas de Cesto, following the CA-266.

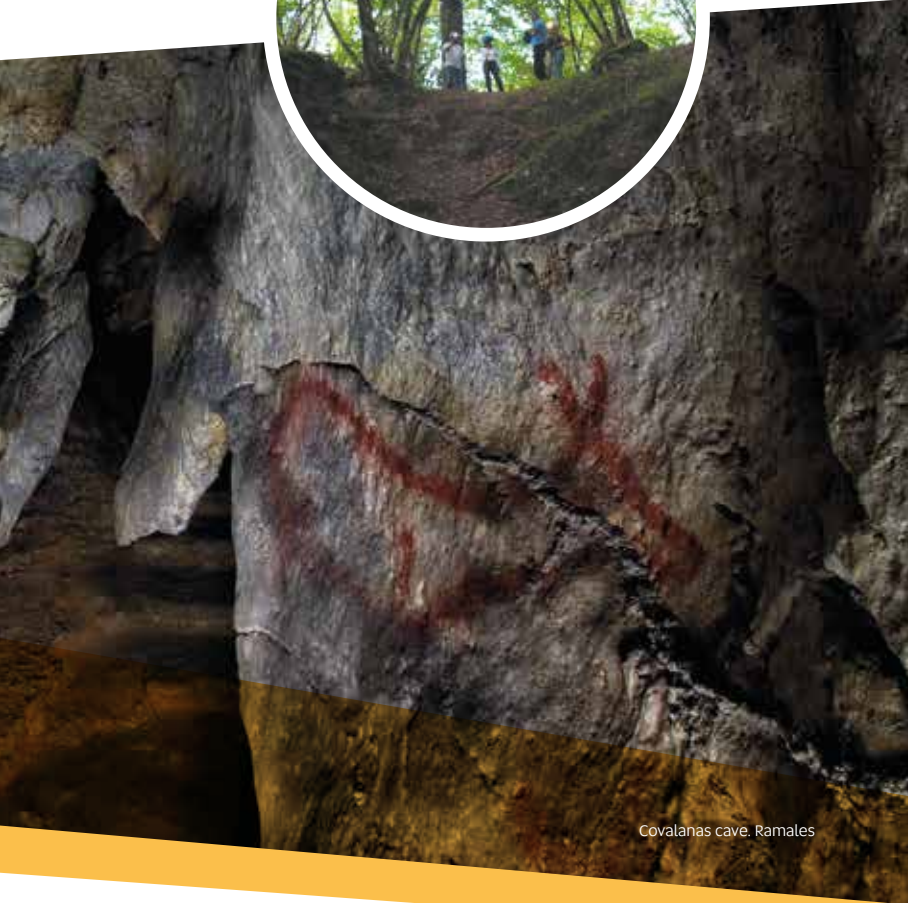
Caves of the Alto Asón

More than four thousand caves are scattered all over the subsoil of the Asón-Agüera district, forming one of the largest underground cave systems in Europe. The quantity and quality of the caves, some of them connected one another, have made it a world-renowned area for geologists and speleologists. These underground treasures, only known by cave specialists before, have been opened to the general public. A circuit of visits guided by experts allow anyone to discover this geological wonders, regardless of their experience or physical shape.



Horse. Covalanas cave

Tocinos cave. Ampuero

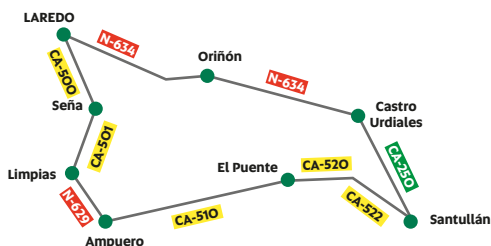


Covalanas cave. Rames



FROM LAREDO TO LAREDO

through Castro and Ampuero



APPROXIMATE DISTANCE: 60 Km.

The East Coast of Cantabria boasts two of the best known seafaring towns in the region: Laredo and Castro Urdiales, which become noted tourist destinations during the summer months, thanks to their beautiful beaches and the large number of services provided to their visitors. It is an area with plenty of sheer cliffs that offer wonderful sights along the way.

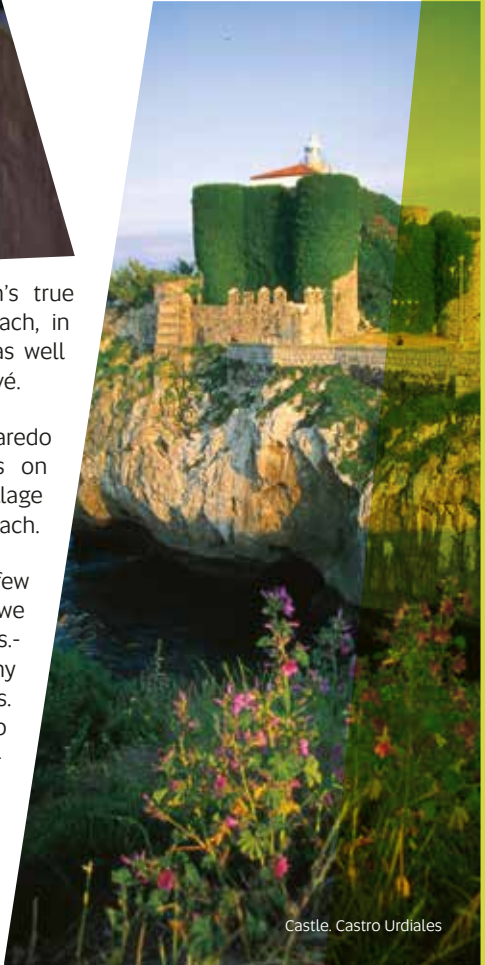
Laredo. This is the departure point of this route. Its most typical area is formed by Puebla Vieja and El Arrabal, declared a Historic-Artistic Ensemble. Its narrow streets or rúas, where the most characteristic buildings can be found, are the beehive of social and cultural activity.



But nature is the town's true heritage: El Regatón beach, in the Treto estuary area, as well as the 5-km beach of Salvé.

Oriñón. Going from Laredo towards Castro Urdiales on the N-634, we find this village and its small and cozy beach.

Castro Urdiales. A few kilometres farther on, we arrive at Castro Urdiales. This town boasts many attractions for its visitors. Its history, going back to the Romans, is discovered through its monuments: the Gothic church of Santa María, its Medieval Castle and the fishermen's quarter with its narrow streets. A stroll around the Rompeolas, the breakwater, as well as tasting the wonderful seafood, make for an attractive stop.



Castle. Castro Urdiales

Seña. From El Puente, taking the CA-511 y then the 510, the route will lead us to Ampuero, leaving behind the turn-off to Alto de las Nieves, where there is a megalithic complex. Once in Ampuero, we will take the N-629 to Limpias, and from there, the turn-off to Seña along the CA-501. After we have passed this town, in the direction towards Laredo on the CA-500, we will find a fantastic viewpoint over the bay.

Valle de Villaverde

Valle de Villaverde, with its capital in La Matanza, is a Cantabrian municipality nestled in the valley of Encartaciones. Of eminently rural character, it offers well-preserved hilly landscapes and a trail network to enjoy them.

Its former schools host an interesting Interpretation Centre of Ethnography that shows the traditional way of life in this part of Cantabria, characterized by the close relationship with nature, where seasons set the rhythm of daily tasks. This interpretation centre brings the opportunity of learning about popular trades, such as the making of charcoal or the production of cider and Txacoli. We can see what a traditional sawmill looked like and find out about details and traditions of daily life in the village.

Mendirichaga palace
Villaverde



INFORMATION OF INTEREST

TOURIST OFFICES BELONGING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANTABRIA

SANTANDER

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Mercado del Este. Hernán Cortés, 4. 39003
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Teléfono Vacaciones: 901 111 112
Infocantur: 902 210 112
turismosantander@cantur.com

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turismo@ayto-santander.es

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turismo@cabezondelasal.net

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museohedilla@ecoparque.info

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oficinadeturismo@comillas.es

FONTIBRE

Argüeso castle
Hermandad de Campoo de Suso. 39212.
Tel. 942 779 607
cunadelebrofontibre@gmail.com

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Tel. 942 643 026
turismo@aytoliendo.org

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Teléfono y Fax 942 630 306
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(Facing the Museum of Ethnography)
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cultura@valderredible.es

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Lebaniego Studies Center. 39570.
Tel. 942 730 787
turismopotes@yahoo.es

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Teléfono y Fax 942 646 504
turismo@cantabriorientalrural.es

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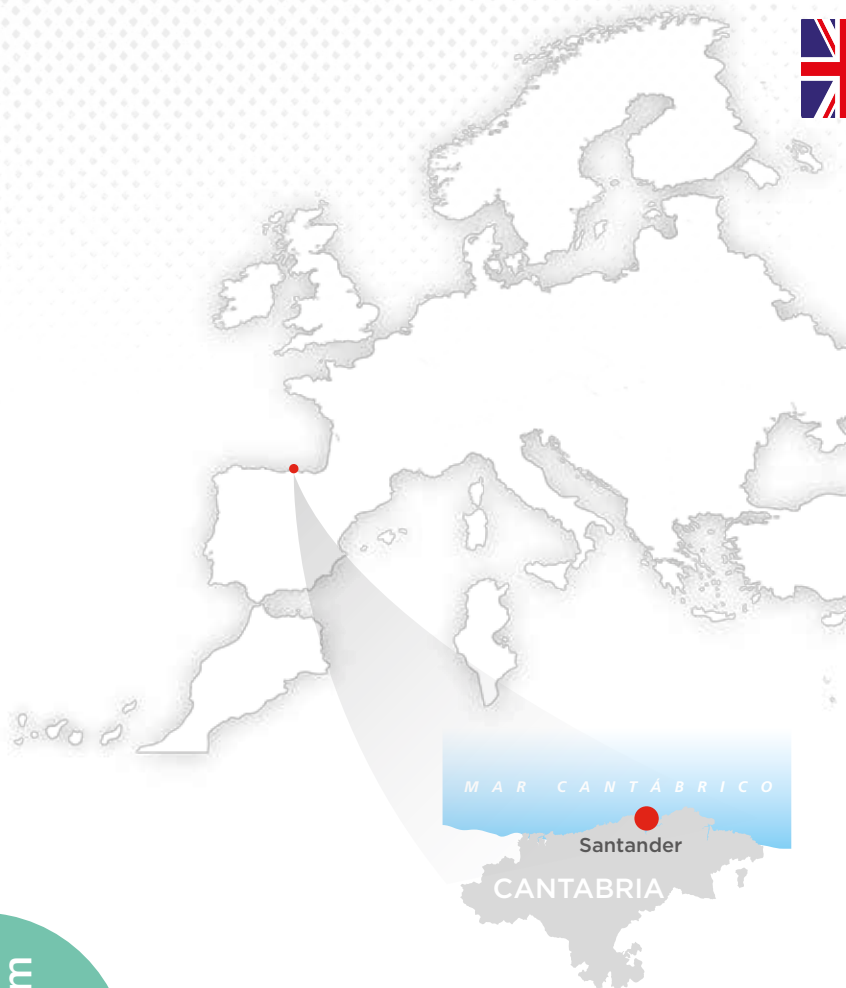
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