What is the Mar de Santiago route?

The Atlantic Ocean in the area embracing the mouth of the Ulla River is the starting point of the tradition featuring the first pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Vilanova marks the beginning of the magical trip that takes us along the Mar de Santiago route, following in the wake of the boat that brought the Apostle's remains to Galicia, as far as Pontecesures. This sea-river route passes in turn through the legendary regions of Valga and Catoira, featuring their gastronomy, their history and their culture.

The Vilanova playwright and author Valle-Inclán, Valga's famous singer Bella Otero or the first Archbishop of Compostela, Diego Xelmírez from Catoira, will be the personages that accompany us on this adventure. They will guide us on a trip whose gastronomy will introduce us to the best Galician mussels, the most traditional eau-de-vies or the area's famous eels. An experience that will enable us to relive the invasions of the Normans that came to plunder Santiago's treasures, by means of Catoira's internationally renowned Viking Festival; or to immerse ourselves in the crystal-clear waters of Ría de Arousa, at Vilanova's As Sinas and O Terrón beaches, or Valga's Vilarello river beach.

The end of our itinerary, Pontecesures, will give us a close-up view of a 1st-century Roman bridge with twelve arches, which was renovated in the 12th century by Maestro Mateo, right beside the town's jetty and the place on the River Ulla where lamprey have been caught for hundreds of years. In the "praza de abastos" (food market), just a few metres from the river port, we can discover this delicacy and many of Galicia's other gastronomic gems.

Follow the 17 stone crosses that mark the itinerary. Return to the origin of the Camino and discover Mar de Santiago: a route where you can immerse yourself in history and feel the spirit of the first pilgrims that travelled to Compostela, step by step, drop by drop.

Vilanova de Arousa

Footbridge leading to O Terrón beach

Monument to Valle-Inclán in Praza do Castro

Mar de Santiago's port

The playwright and author Ramón del Valle-Inclán is the illustrious local resident that will accompany us on a magical trip to this fishing town, in one of Galicia's main mussel-producing areas under the protected designation of origin (PDO) "Mexillón de Galicia." This coastal region characterised by beaches of calm water and golden sand, with the Ría de Arousa always on the horizon, also features exceptional natural habitats, such as Monte Lobeira —where we can enjoy wonderful views of the surroundings— and historical remains. All of this makes visiting Vilanova a must if we want to become acquainted with the Mar de Santiago area.

Do not miss

- Mar de Santiago Port
- O Terrón and As Sinas beaches
- Valle-Inclán House-Museum
- Monte Lobeira viewpoint

Catoira

Torres do Oeste

Compostela's fort

Due to the invasion of Viking pirates that came to plunder Santiago Cathedral's treasures, Diego Gelmírez, born in Catoira and Compostela's first archbishop, ordered the construction of a strategic military building in the 12th century: the so-called Torres do Oeste. This fort of the apostolic city, at the time when the first pilgrimages were beginning, became a symbol of defence and splendour in the period when Catoira protected Ría de Arousa from Scandinavian expeditions. In a matchless natural setting and home to numerous native species, this locality takes us to the banks of the Ulla River, to the wetland of golden and green colours that also forms part of the scenery, and to walks and panoramic views from its windmills.

Do not miss

- Torres do Oeste
- Windmills
- Pedras Miúdas Lagoon
- Viking Festival (internationally renowned)

Longship disembarking during the Viking Festival

Valga

Parafita and Raxoi waterfalls

The Ulla River's treasure

The river that meanders through the Ulla Valley delimits the region of Carolina Otero, better known as La Bella Otero, a singer, actress and iconic figure of the Belle Époque. Natural gems such as the Parafita and Raxoi waterfalls and waterwheels, with natural freshwater pools, the pretty river park in the town centre and attractions such as the Vilarello river park or the double-arm windmills at the Beiro viewpoint, make this municipality a green paradise in the centre of Pontevedra province. A region of eau-de-vies and eels, Valga is also the birthplace of the historian and researcher Xesús Ferro Couselo, who was the featured author on the Day of Galician Letters in 1996.

Do not miss

- Parafita and Raxoi waterfalls and waterwheels
- Vilarello river park
- Mina Mercedes Lagoon
- Local Eel and Eua-de-Vie Festival

Stone cross at the Vilarello river beach

Pontecesures

Roman bridge

Where the Caminos merge

This locality is called after the Roman bridge linking the provinces of A Coruña and Pontevedra. The Ulla River delimits one of the Galician regions where lamprey is the undisputed culinary star, the result of artisanal fishing techniques that go back for centuries; it also has its own gastronomy festival. Viewpoints featuring panoramic views of the fantastic valley surrounding Pontecesures, a food market with the best local produce and numerous heritage sites related to the history of this municipality that goes back to the 1st century AD, complete the tourist sights of this destination where the Mar de Santiago sea-river route links with the Portuguese Way.

Boat in the river port, used to catch lamprey

Do not miss

- Roman bridge
- "Praza de Abastos" (food market) and Lamprey House
- River port
- Lamprey Festival

Camino de Santiago
(Way of St James)

The Mar de Santiago route is located in Galicia, the final destination of all the Caminos, and more specifically in the centre of Ría de Arousa, the most famous of Galicia's "rías" or estuaries.

Starting from the port of Vilanova de Arousa, we will go up part of the ria and the final section of the Ulla River. We will travel through landscapes of great beauty and historical importance in the localities of Catoira and Valga, until we reach our destination: the river port of Pontecesures.

From there, our route links with the final stage of the Portuguese Way, only 25 km from our final destination: Santiago de Compostela.

Traslatio:
The route that gave rise to the Camino

The first Camino plying the Mar de Santiago route, the original Camino, takes us back to the seed of the jubilee, the Traslatio, experiencing first-hand the adventures of Athanasius and Theodore, the Apostle's disciples, who brought his body back to Galicia, the region where he had preached.

According to legend, after completing this sea-river crossing, the Apostle's remains were buried in the hill called Liberum Donum. This was the exact spot where, centuries later, Santiago Cathedral was erected, thereby becoming a pilgrimage destination from the Middle Ages to our day and the final destination of the Mar de Santiago route.

Xacobeo 21·22

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Concello de Vilanova

Concello de Catoira

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Concello de Pontecesures

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Mar de Santiago

Origin of the Camino