

magazine traveling

ENGLISH EDITION

TRAVEL AND GASTRONOMY MAGAZINE

No. 78 Year 2026 Price: €6.00 – Canary Islands and international €9.00

La Rioja
Among monasteries,
vineyards and kitchens



MONGOLIA
Following in the foot-
steps of Genghis Khan

Miami
100 years of Art Deco
in Miami Beach

Lleida
as autumn
sets the pace

CANTABRIA
Land of historic
paths

ON PAPER AND DIGITAL, A HAND-CRAFTED MAGAZINE FOR YOU



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a teal patterned swimsuit, stands barefoot on a large, mossy rock in the foreground. She is looking towards a large, multi-tiered waterfall cascading over dark, moss-covered rocks. The water is white and frothy as it falls. The surrounding forest is lush and green, with some trees visible in the upper corners of the frame. The overall scene is vibrant and captures the beauty of Costa Rica's natural landscape during the rainy season.

During the rainy season, the Costa Rican landscape reveals its most vibrant side. The forests are at their greenest, the waterfalls flow more freely, and the volcanoes serve as a guiding thread for exploring a country that has made the protection of nature a way of life.

Costa Rica
Start living

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**COSTA
RICA**



Journey among volcanoes

Volcanoes provide the key to understanding much of Costa Rica's geography. They have shaped the mountains, enriched the soil and created landscapes where lava fields, fumaroles, lakes, high-altitude forests and hot springs coexist.

The Arenal, with its conical shape, is one of the country's great icons. Its ancient lava fields can be explored via footpaths, and the day usually ends at the hot springs in La Fortuna. The Poás is quite different; its enormous active crater can be viewed from an easily accessible viewpoint. The excursion lends itself to a continuation through the coffee plantations and strawberry fields in the highlands of Alajuela.

Irazú offers a more austere, almost lunar landscape. On clear days, both the Pacific and the Caribbean can be seen from its summit. Its proximity to Cartago means you can round off the visit with a trip to the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, the ruins of the ancient city or the Orosí Valley.

In **Guanacaste**, Rincón de la Vieja displays geothermal activity through fumaroles, mud pools and hot springs. In the same province, the **Tenorio** volcano overlooks one of Costa Rica's best-known landscapes: the Río Celeste, whose turquoise waters wind through the forest before plunging over a waterfall some thirty metres high. Miravalles, less frequently visited, offers thermal baths, mineral mud baths and trails amongst waterfalls.

Turrialba retains a more rural atmosphere. Its surroundings invite visitors to combine the volcanic landscape with the River Pacuare and a cuisine rooted in the countryside, in which Turrialba cheese holds a special place.

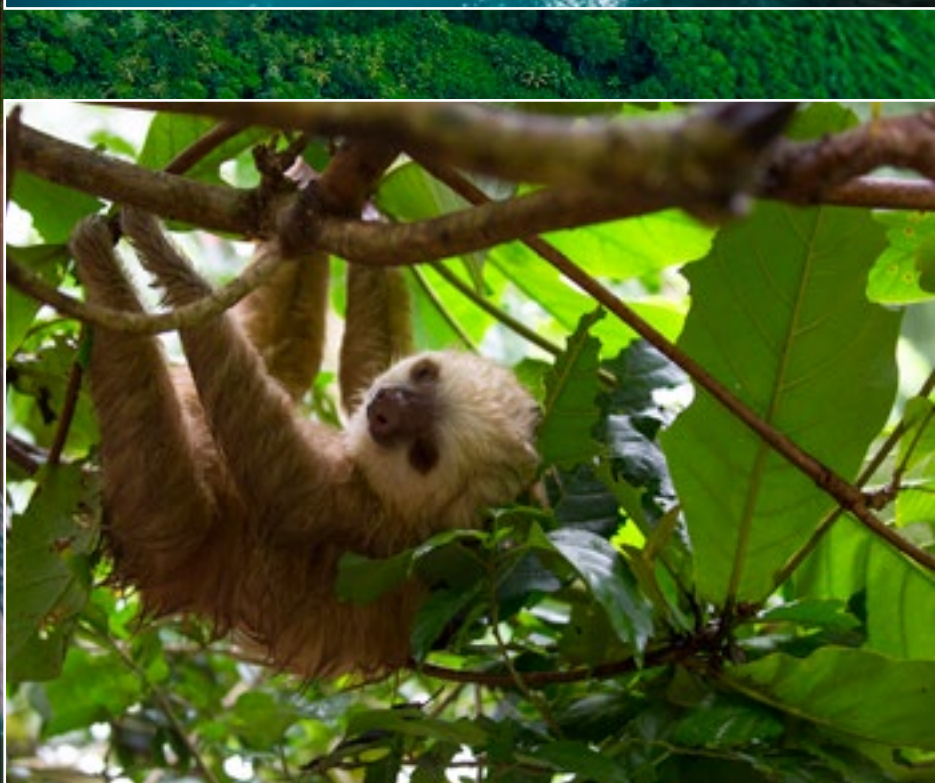
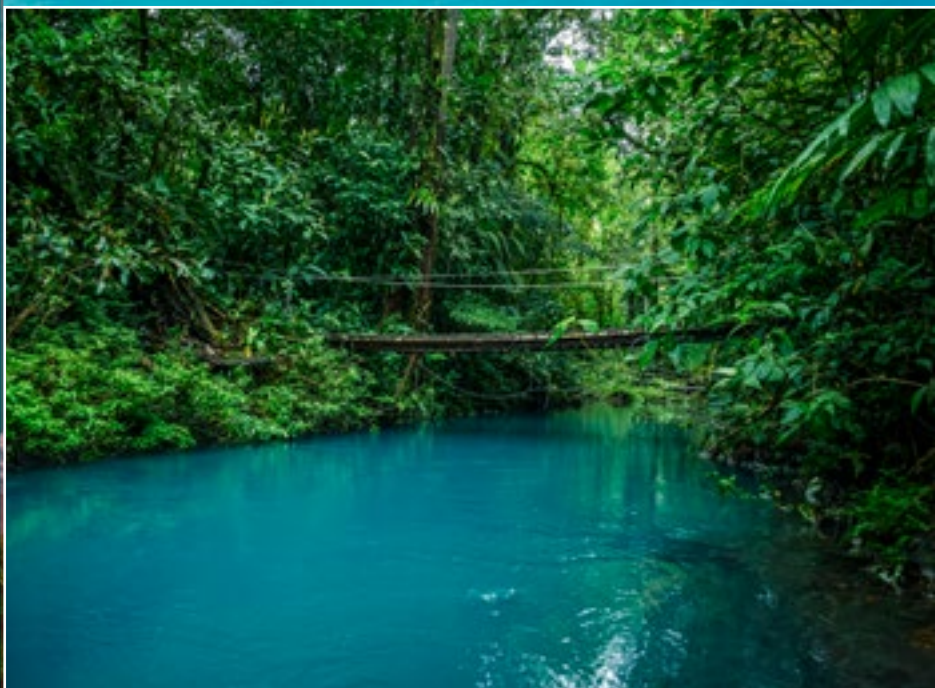
The country is becoming greener

Between May and November, Costa Rica enters the green season. It rains, of course, but that doesn't mean you have to miss out on your days. Rainfall tends to alternate with dry spells, and mornings are perfect for hikes, national park visits, and forest tours. Afternoons can be set aside for hot springs, dining, or simply relaxing while it rains.

It's a particularly rewarding time to travel. The vegetation grows lush, the rivers flow more vigorously, and the waterfalls are at their most spectacular. It also coincides with some of the country's greatest natural spectacles. Humpback whales can be spotted in the Pacific waters, especially in August and September, while various beaches welcome sea turtles that come ashore to lay their eggs. Birds, monkeys, sloths, and an extraordinary variety of species complete a landscape that changes with every step.

Costa Rica combines Caribbean and Pacific coastlines, cloud forests, tropical rainforests, mangroves, and mountains within a territory barely larger than that of Aragón. About 59% of the country is covered by forest, and more than a quarter of its land area is under some form of protection. Here, conservation is not merely a tourism marketing ploy. It is part of a model that welcomes travelers without compromising natural heritage or the livelihoods of local communities.

esencial
COSTA
RICA



Life around travel

The Costa Rican experience doesn't end at its national parks. It continues with a cup of coffee, a breakfast of gallo pinto or a ceviche made with fresh produce. Tica cuisine blends indigenous, Spanish and African influences, and is closely tied to local, seasonal ingredients.

The well-known phrase 'Pura Vida' is also ever-present. It is used to greet people, say thank you or indicate that everything is going well, but its true meaning is best understood whilst travelling. It speaks of hospitality, warmth and a relaxed way of relating to others and to the land.

Costa Rica invites you to travel at a leisurely pace, to walk, observe and listen. During the wet season, the water restores the landscape to its full vigour and reveals a country that is vibrant, diverse and at one with nature. It is a way of understanding the true meaning of **Pura Vida**.



Welcome aboard

Autumn has always been a great time to travel. Cities regain their vibrancy, the landscapes change colour and many cuisines turn their attention back to seasonal produce. This issue of Traveling is born out of that spirit: to explore the world with time, curiosity and a desire to understand each place.

We begin far afield, in **Mongolia**, following in the footsteps of Genghis Khan; we continue on to **Uzbekistan**, following the ancient Silk Road between **Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand**. We then cross the Atlantic to celebrate a hundred years of Art Deco in **Miami Beach** and arrive in **St Maarten**, a small Caribbean island shared by two countries. In **Switzerland**, the **Aletsch Glacier** awaits us, whilst the new **Legend of the Sea** takes us on a journey through the Mediterranean. **La Rioja** occupies a prominent place in these pages. We visited its monasteries, villages, vineyards, and cellars, but we also sat at its table to discover a cuisine that knows how to respect the bounty. Continuing the legacy and tradition. The journey continues through **Lleida** in autumn, the **historic routes of Cantabria**, the heritage of the **Ripollès** and the **Soria of Machado**, with the **Laguna Negra** as one of its most recognisable landscapes. In **Glamorgan** we find another way of engaging with the land, based on balance and respect for the island. We explore **Aranjuez** at a leisurely pace; Manena shows us the 'before' and 'after' of **Warsaw**; and finally we stay amongst the vineyards at the winery-hotel **Finca de los Arandinos** in Training, La Rioja.

The culinary experience rounds off the Strip with five autumn herds, a tour of Castellón and two restaurants we've tried: Bichopalo, in Madrid, and El Clautro, in Granada.

These are very different destinations, united by the same approach to travelling: observing closely, learning about the history and enjoying everything that gives a place its character. This is yet another journey we propose here at Traveling.

Thank you for joining us. **The journey begins now.**



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Deposit Legal: M-1097-2018

ISSN: 2660-8146





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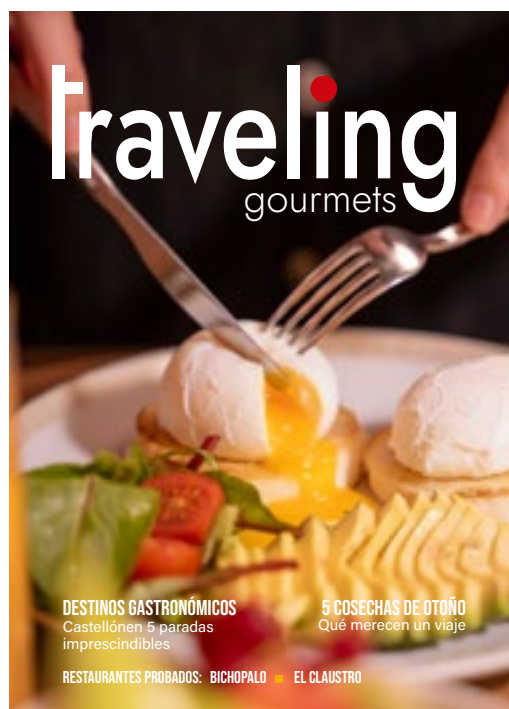
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COVER

Monastery of Santa María
la Real in Nájera
© Jose A. Muñoz



COVER

Eggs Benedict
El Claustro Restaurant
© Hotel Palacio de Santa Paula

MONGOLIA

Following in Genghis Khan's footsteps

Text and photography: Raúl pingarro

Ten days,
nine nights,
and 1,700
kilometres
through
deserts,
volcanoes,
and lakes.
In Mongolia,
there is
no middle
ground: here,
the steppe
rules, and
GPS is often
useless.



Yurt camp

H Journeys made with a rickety suitcase and others where the suitcase is strapped to the backseat of a motocross bike – this is the kind of adventure I have in mind, and today I'd like to invite you to accompany me on a trip that smells of gasoline and tastes of dust, to Mongolia, the land where Genghis Khan founded the largest empire that has ever existed in history. Toria, and eight hundred years later, one can reconstruct part of its legend. Ten days. Nine nights. One thousand seven hundred kilometers. A great proportion of adrenaline. It is very clear who is in charge here: The steppe, not the GPS.

Deserts, volcanoes, lakes, and hot springs. Monasteries, eagle roosts, and other marvelous rarities.

Our journey begins in **Ulaanbaatar** The capital, which shelters half of the country's population. There, one gets crammed into the constant din of chaos caused by traffic, and has to navigate traffic lights at crossroads. A logic that the outsider doesn't understand, where the cleverest wins the priority. However, a few kilometers further, this commotion transforms into silence and the literal absence of human presence.

That's when you realize something: Mongolia has no middle ground. Either it's everything or nothing.

No matter where you look, there are only steppes that disappear into the horizon, valleys that seem from another planet, dunes of sand that appear out of nowhere as if someone had moved the Sahara. There are few roads, but endless straight stretches, and dirt tracks—many of them—that snake between mountains without asking anyone's permission.





1. Orkhon Falls in Uvurkhangai
2. Nothing stands in our way
3. Mongolian steppe

MONGOLIA



Yaks grazing - Photo below, Lake Terkhinn



There are no impossible paths





Supermarket on the route
We are blessed with motorbikes for good luck



Ulaanbaatar city centre, Chojin Lama Temple Museum

SIGNATURE JOURNEYS

Among the obligatory stops are palaces and archaeological remains, such as the Zayan Gegeen monastery, founded in 1616 in Tsetserleg; the Erdene Zuu monastery, the oldest in Mongolia, in Karakorum; or the ruins of Khar Balgas, the forgotten capital of the Orkhon valley, which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, not just for this monument, but for its 1,200 years of nomadic history.

A story that continues to live, not just through their customs (such as spreading yak milk on the wheels of their vehicles before setting off to wish the traveler good luck), but in the everyday use of traditional clothing by much of the population, their rustic cuisine, and their accommodations, which, after a long day on a motorcycle, become the true protagonists: the yurts, warm and surprisingly welcoming, though without running water, electricity, or internet. Here, on this part of the planet, time, undoubtedly, has taken a break.

The moral of the journey.

Genghis Khan conquered half the world on horseback. We, with a bit less imperial ambition, merely aspire to conquer a few dirt tracks, a couple of river crossings, and a perfect waterfall for our Instagram post to give envy. But if at the end of the trip one returns with boots full of dust, a slightly wider smile, and a lot more enthusiasm to tell the tale, then even a small empire empire has been conquered.



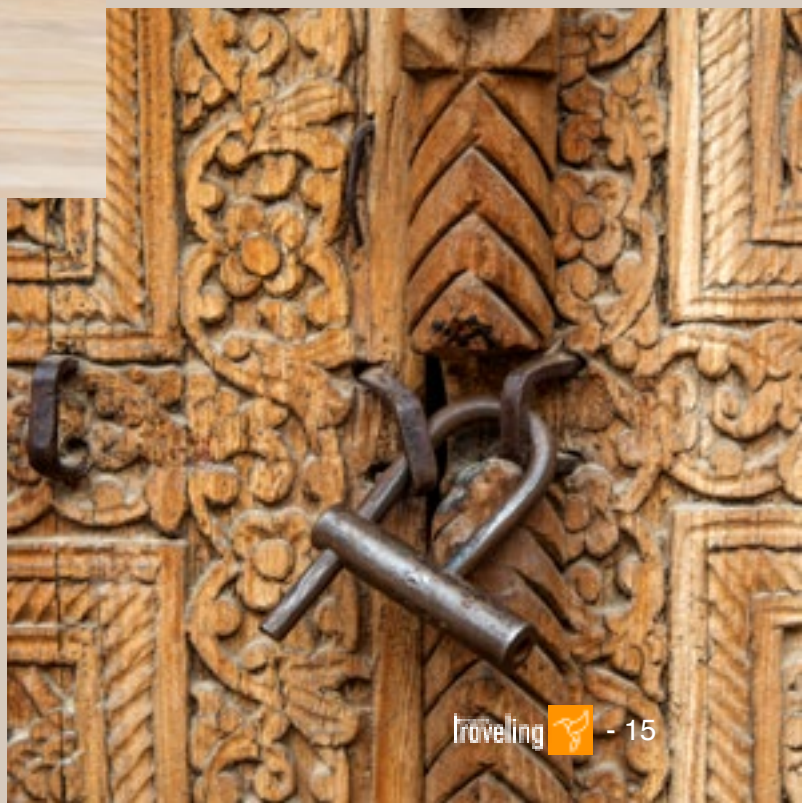
Uzbekistan

In the footsteps of the Silk Road

Text and photographs: Sandra Fernández Gil - fdez.gil.sandra@gmail.com

Photo: Registan Square, Samarkand. A monumental complex comprising the madrasas of Ulugh Beg, Sher-Dor and Tilya-Kori.

From the walls of Khiva to the domes of Samarkand, Uzbekistan preserves some of the cities that for centuries facilitated trade between East and West. A journey through caravanserais, madrasas, bazaars and squares that still evoke that era of splendour and caravans





HThere are names that one comes across long before knowing exactly where they are. Samarkand is one of them. So is Bukhara. For centuries, they appeared in travel books, chronicles and merchants' accounts as distant cities, situated somewhere between East and West. Places through which caravans laden with silk, spices, porcelain, precious stones, metals and fabrics passed after travelling vast distances.

The location of present-day Uzbekistan played a major role in all of this. It lies at the very heart of Central Asia, amongst deserts, mountains and ancient routes linking China, Persia, India and the Mediterranean. That is why cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva eventually became important stopping-off points for traders and travellers. There, people would rest, negotiate, trade animals, exchange goods and, above all, share information.

It is also worth remembering that the Silk Road was never a specific road or a single route. It was a vast network of paths that changed according to wars, the security situation in each territory or the needs of trade. The very name 'Silk Road' is relatively modern: it was popularised in the 19th century by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen to refer to those trade routes that linked Asia and Europe for centuries.

And it was not only valuable objects that travelled along these routes. Ideas, knowledge, religions and techniques also circulated. Paper, for example, originated in China and spread westwards through Central Asia. Mathematicians, astronomers, doctors and scholars found important

centres of learning in these cities. Samarkand reached one of its greatest periods of splendour under Tamerlane and his descendants, who transformed it into a monumental capital. Many of the madrasas, mausoleums and grand buildings that amaze visitors today date from that period.

Travelling through Uzbekistan today is, of course, much easier. High-speed trains connect some of its major cities, and motorways have replaced the ancient caravan routes. But when you arrive in Samarkand, enter Bukhara or walk along the walls of Khiva, you immediately realise that this history remains very much alive. You don't need to use your imagination too much: the ancient trading centres, madrasas, bazaars and caravanserais continue to form part of the city.

That is why the Silk Road is not merely a tourist selling point for Uzbekistan. It is probably the best way to understand why these cities became so important and why, many centuries later, they still have something that sets them apart from other destinations in Central Asia. It is not just great monuments that have been preserved here. The legacy of an era in which much of the trade between East and West necessarily passed through these lands has also been preserved. And that history continues to be evident today in the bazaars, in the architecture and in the very way we understand these cities.

Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis, Samarkand. Detail of the entrance portal clad in glazed ceramics

Khiva behind the walls



Dome of the Pahlavan Mahmud Mausoleum

Itchan Kala is centred on a walled enclosure containing dozens of historical monuments. It is the best place on the trip to understand how a caravan city functioned before continuing on to Bukhara and Samarkand

From the outside, Itchan Kala looks like a fortress built in the middle of an almost desert-like landscape. A great adobe wall protects the old town of Khiva, and simply stepping through one of its gates transforms the scene completely. Narrow streets, minarets, mosques, madrasas and old houses form a compact ensemble where it is easy to wander aimlessly for hours. Itchan Kala was the first Uzbek city to be inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, in 1990, and retains much of the structure of an ancient Central Asian caravan city.

The Kalta Minor, wide and covered in turquoise tiles, is probably the most eye-catching building. Its unfinished appearance has become part of the city's image. Nearby are the Muhammad Amin Khan Madrasah, the Islam Khoja complex and the Juma Mosque, whose interior surprises visitors with its forest of wooden columns supporting the ceiling. But Khiva is at its best when you leave the monuments behind for a while. Early in the morning or as evening begins to fall, the streets regain a tranquillity that allows you to imagine what life was like within those walls. There are still homes, small workshops, market stalls and families passing through the very same gates as travellers.

View of the ancient walled city of Itchan Kala



Bukhara trade and daily life

Bukhara reveals itself in a different way. Whilst Khiva seems enclosed within its own history, Bukhara is more intertwined with everyday life. It is over two thousand years old and was one of the great commercial and cultural centres of the Silk Road. It is best to start here at the Poi Kalon. The Kalon minaret has dominated the complex for centuries and, at its foot, the Kalon Mosque and the Mir-i-Arab Madrasah form one of those places where you end up wandering round several times before moving on.

Distances in the centre are short and much of Bukhara can be explored on foot. You'll come across ancient madrasas, mosques, courtyards, workshops and the old commercial domes, beneath which, for centuries,

goods from a wide variety of places were bought and sold. Commercial activity has not disappeared. Today, carpets, textiles, ceramics, embroidery, spices and souvenirs are sold, although it is still easy to find artisans working in small workshops. Those routes did not merely transport goods. Languages, religions, knowledge, recipes, craft techniques and ideas travelled along them too, and in cities such as Bukhara they eventually blended together.

In the late afternoon, Lyabi-Hauz takes on a different atmosphere. Locals and visitors gather around the pond whilst restaurants set up their tables under the trees. It is a good time to try plov, one of the staple dishes of Uzbek cuisine, made with rice, meat, carrots and spices, as well as samsa, round breads and sweets.



View of the Ark Fortress



The craft workshops in Bukhara preserve some of the trades that for centuries have been linked to the city's commercial activity

Samarkand the grand stage



Arriving in Samarkand is a special experience because you arrive with a preconceived image in mind: the Registan. Three great madrasas frame a square that for centuries was one of the city's main public spaces. Their façades, covered in mosaics, tiles and geometric patterns, seem to change colour as the day progresses. Historic Samarkand flourished particularly during the Timurid period, between the 14th and 15th centuries. Timur made the city the capital of his empire and brought architects, craftsmen and artists from various regions to settle there.

That power is still evident in its monuments. In addition to the Registan, there is the enormous Bibi-Khanum Mosque, the Gur-e Amir mausoleum, where Timur is buried, and the Shah-i-Zinda funerary complex, arguably one of the city's most exquisite and astonishing sites. Shah-i-Zinda is a succession of mausoleums linked by a narrow street, with façades covered in blue, turquoise and white ceramics that demonstrate the sophistication of the workshops of that era.

Very close to Bibi-Khanum is the Siyob Bazaar, where the journey returns to street level. Nuts, spices, breads, fruit and sweets fill the stalls whilst sellers and buyers haggle as they have done for generations. It is a far more everyday scene than the Registan, and perhaps that is why it feels so essential. Behind the great domes, there has always been a city.

◀ A play of light and mosaics inside Shah-i-Zinda

▼ View of the Shah-i-Zinda Necropolis





Archway of the mosque in Samarkand, the Eternal City, Boqiy Shahar Complex

What remains of the Silk Road

Uzbekistan has changed greatly since the days when caravans took weeks or months to reach these cities. There are no longer camels laden with goods entering the gates of Khiva, and the ancient trading domes of Bukhara now sell very different goods. Trains connect much of the country and allow travellers to move between some of its main historic cities with a ease that those merchants could scarcely have imagined.

But the essence of the journey still lies in the journey itself. Khiva retains the scale of a walled city; Bukhara, that of merchants and craftsmen; Samarkand, the grandeur of a city that sought to become the centre of an empire. They are three very different cities and, at the same time, three chapters of the same story.

There is no need to search for a lost Silk Road. It remains in the form of the cities, in their bazaars, in the courtyards of the madrasas, in a piece of pottery, in the loaves of bread stacked in the markets and in the blues that cover the façades of Samarkand.

Centuries have passed since those caravans crossed Asia, but it is still possible to follow in their footsteps.

Three cities, three characters

Jivare retains the scale of a walled city.

Bukhara preserves its tradition of trade and craftsmanship.

Samarkand embodies the grandeur of the ancient Timurid Empire.

Traditional crafts at a bazaar in Bukhara



MIAMI BEACH

ART DÉCO



Text and Photography: José Antonio Muñoz



View of Ocean Drive and its unique and colorful buildings

Essex House, nautical curves, and Art Deco geometry



In Miami Beach, Art Deco dominates entire streets. It doesn't appear in isolated buildings or as an out-of-place element. Instead, it adorns the hotels on Ocean Drive, Collins Avenue, and even the old apartments and small businesses that were built when this area was becoming a vacation destination. Its low scale, curving lines, and façades designed to entice travelers still define the district.

Walk Ocean Drive early in the morning when the terraces are still empty and the light allows you to appreciate the buildings. The ocean lies behind the palm trees and Lummus Park. On the other side of the road, three- and four-story hotels stand close together, none standing out for their size. What catches the eye is the ensemble.

I notice rounded corners, horizontal bands, awnings over the windows, and decorative finials rising up the center of the facades. The names of the hotels are written vertically: Colony, Breakwater, Leslie, Carlyle, Caradozo. Some are so well-known that it's hard to separate the building from the image that decades of film and television have created.

Miami Beach preserves over 800 properties built between 1923 and 1943. While many are Art Deco (Art Decó in Spanish), the district also includes Mediterranean Revival styles and later examples of Miami Modern, or MiMo. Despite the presence of other styles, the concentration of Art Deco building is exceptional and has come to define South Beach.

The style that arrived just in time

The Art Deco name comes from the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris in 1925. The new language was recognized by its geometry, symmetry, stepped volumes, and use of modern materials. It quickly moved from objects and furniture to architecture.

In cities like New York, it had achieved a monumental scale. The Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building took that love for verticality and progress to new heights. Miami Beach needed something different. Here, they were not building large corporate headquarters, but hotels, apartments, restaurants, and cinemas for a growing tourist zone by the ocean.

The great hurricane of 1926 had caused serious damage and halted the first real real estate development. However, after the Great Depression, building resumed in the 1930s.

Art deco coincided with the need to build economical, modern and attractive lodgings for travelers arriving from the northern United States in search of good weather.

Architects such as Henry Hohauser, L. Murray Dixon, and Albert Anis worked on narrow solaris and low-rise buildings. They couldn't rely on large dimensions, so they used the facade to distinguish each hotel. A central apex, a curved corner, a well-placed relief, or a well-chosen sign were enough to draw attention from the pavement.

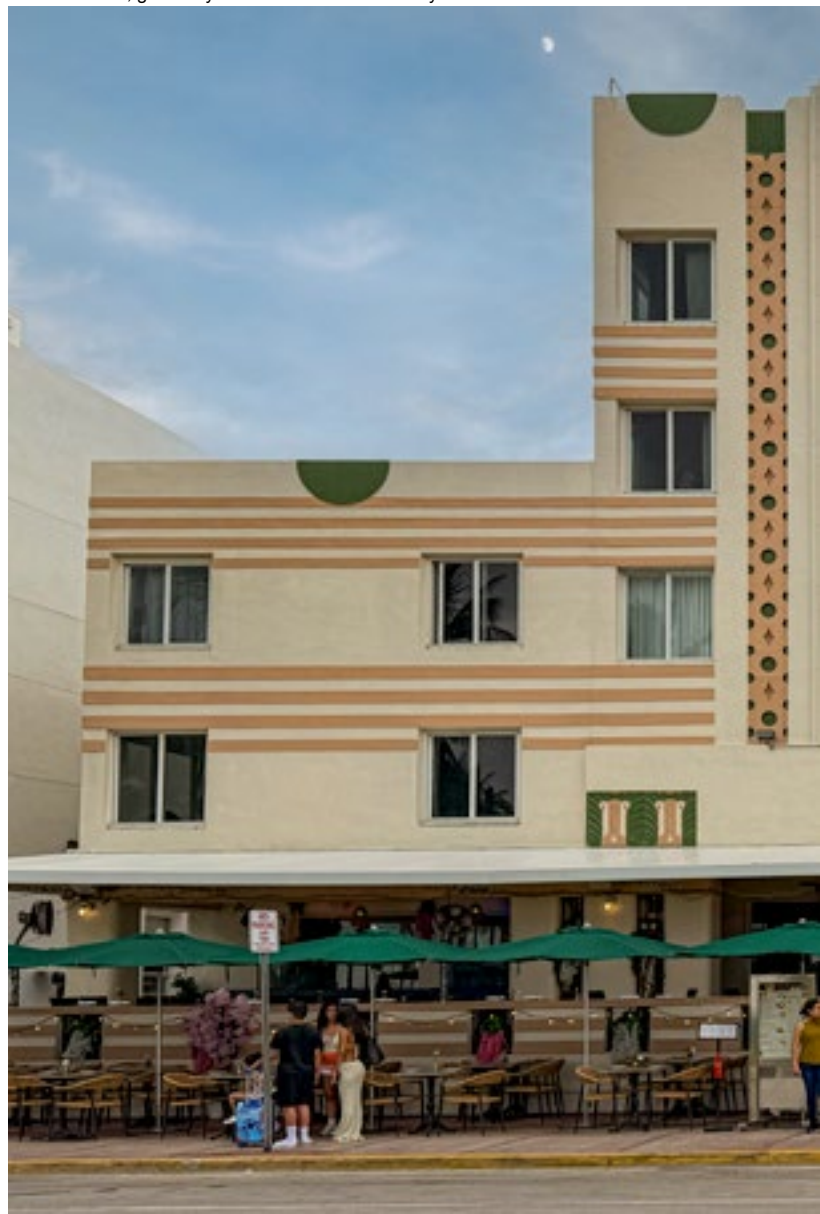
Architecture may seem simple, but it is very carefully measured. Most facades are organized into three parts. The central section usually rises slightly and the sides maintain a symmetric composition. Horizontal bands lengthen the building; vertical lines indicate the entrance and give height to modest constructions.

The architecture of the movement

Stopping in front of the Colony Hotel, I understand better that combination. The building is narrow and doesn't have excessive decoration. The large central sign, horizontal lines, and stepped apex are enough to give it character.

The Breakwater operates with the same idea, though its central tower is more marked. The side bodies appear to extend to both sides as a ship's cover. It's no match that so many buildings reflect the transatlantic.

Beacon Hotel, geometry and colour in Art Deco key





The unmistakable Colony Hotel, right on Ocean Drive



The Miami Beach art déco was especially developed during the Streamline Modern phase, a style interested in the Speed and aerodynamic forms of trains, cars, aircraft and large ships.

The curved edges seem to resemble prow. The round windows recall cow eyes. Horizontal balustrades and some small towers complete that nautical appearance. Across the Atlantic, such a reference doesn't seem forced.

Hey, there were also solutions that catered to the climate. The concrete caps placed over the windows, known as eyebrows, shielded the rooms from the sun. The glass blocks allowed the light into the stairs and lobbies without exposing the interior. The terrazzo flooring stood up well to hotel usage and felt fresh underfoot.

Also, there is a Florida-inspired decoration. On the facades, I find palm trees, waves, flamingos, fish, fountains, and solar rays. They are small reliefs, usually integrated into the building's geometry.

Art deco came from Europe, but here it lost some of its solemnity and adapted to a beach destination.

A small museum that explains a lot.

In issue number 1001 of Ocean Drive, I entered the Art Deco Museum, housed within the Welcome Center of the Miami Design Preservation League.



Museum of Art Deco in Miami Beach

The visit doesn't take an entire morning. It's a small and easy-to-examine museum, but it helps to organize what you see outside.

Photographs of nautical models, maquetas, plans, furniture, and material samples explain how Miami Beach grew and how its buildings changed. They also help distinguish the three main styles of the district. The Mediterranean Revival features arches, patios, balconies, tiles, and Spanish or Italian references. The Art Deco favors symmetry, geometric motifs, and flatter facades. The MiMo, developed after World War II, introduces large overhangs, more free-form shapes, and a still closer connection to the automobile.

I focus particularly on the details that I can recognize on the street: a font, a door handle, a drawing on the terrace, a metal grille, or a lamp. It is understood that design did not end with the façade. The project extended into the interior spaces as well. The hotel's entrance, foyer, and furnishings were all part of the same ambience.

I leave the museum and turn back to look at the Colony. Now I see things that I had overlooked before.

The exact width of the bands, the central entrance, the way the label divides the building. The museum fulfills its best function here: it doesn't replace the stroll, but teaches us to look more carefully.

Collins Avenue and its interior streets

Ocean Drive concentrates the most photographed buildings but the district continues onto Collins Avenue, Washington Avenue and Spanish Way. I walk through these streets because they lose some of their icon status and become daily architecture.

Ancient apartments, small hotels, boutiques, and buildings that preserve their original scale. Some buildings have been restored with care; others show changes, additions, or signs of wear. The mix helps us understand that it wasn't born as a touristy spot.

On Collins Avenue, the buildings tend to be a bit bigger. On Washington Avenue, the traffic, shops, and venues change the ambience. Spanish Way introduces the architecture of Mediterranean Revival



and shows another phase of Miami Beach's development. The historic district, in fact, comprises several sectors that make up the same urban history.

The current colors also deserve clarification. The soft pinks, blues, yellows, and greens that we associate with South Beach today were not always like this. During the 1970s and 1980s, designer Leonard Horowitz developed a palette inspired by Florida's landscape. The color allowed the cornices, bands, and reliefs of buildings, which were then deteriorated and barely noticed, to stand out. Over time, those tones became a visual mark of the district.

Night transforms the Art Deco

I return to Ocean Drive when it starts to get dark. The transformation is complete. The signs come to life, traffic increases, and terraces fill up. What was a quiet street of historic hotels in the morning takes on a different character.

ENeon outlines the facades. It delineates horizontal lines, highlights the towers, and the hotel names gleam on the facades. It's not just additional lighting to make them more picturesque. The labels were part of the architecture. The competition among those establishments that needed to attract customers.

The night of South Beach blends this heritage with a very visible luxury. Fast sports cars, big-engined saloons, and enormous off-road vehicles move slowly, as if Ocean Drive

The Tides, one of the great Art Deco classics on Ocean Drive



MIAMI BEACH

were still a showcase. Music spills from the bars and some hotels. There are pubs, restaurants, and clubs that keep going until the early hours.

Not everything's legendary or purport to be. Miami Beach has an exaggerated point that can be seen in cars, clothing and some terraces. But that display isn't completely alien to the buildings. The art déco also wished to seduce. He used colour, light and names to sell vacation, modernity and a different life by the sea.

Buildings that were at punto de perderse

It proves difficult to imagine Ocean Drive without these hotels, but in the 1970s, many were in disrepair and considered old, unprofitable, and easily replaceable.

Barbara Baer Capitman played a decisive role in their defense. In 1976, she participated in the creation of the Miami Design Preservation League alongside Leonard Horowitz and other activists. They catalogued buildings, organized tours, and explained why recent architecture also deserved to be preserved.

In May 1979, the **Miami Beach Architectural Historic District** was registered in the National Regis-



Palace Bar in the Streamline Moderne style

The Carlyle, the Art Deco icon of Ocean Drive



ter of Historic Places. It was the first urban district in 20th-century America to be recognized in that manner. Protection did not prevent all losses or excesses, but it changed the course of South Beach.

When I leave Ocean Drive, the neon lights still stay on and hotel entrances keep ringing. That's what fascinates me most about this ensemble. It hasn't become a row of closed monuments. The buildings still receive guests, host restaurants, and participate in the nightlife for which they were largely designed.

Art deco in Miami Beach survives because someone recognized its value when it still seemed too recent to be history. Now, as we celebrate its first centenary, it's hard to think of this place without its curvaceous facades, vertical names, and that neon light that, by nightfall, rekindles Miami Beach's glamour, which it always had.



Centenary selfie spot for Art Deco in Miami Beach

Waldorf Towers Hotel





View over the salt lagoon and Philipsburg

St. Maarten

Two flags facing the Caribbean

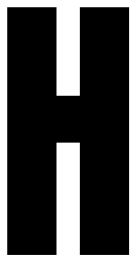
Text and photography: Larissa Rolley - LarissaRolley@outlook.com



France and the Netherlands share just 87 square kilometres of the Caribbean. With its beaches, old salt flats, forts, mangroves and a population hailing from all over the world, Saint Martin (St Maarten) shows that behind the familiar image of Maho Beach lies a far more interesting island, shaped by two cultures, a shared history and a surprising diversity of landscapes, flavours and ways of understanding Caribbean life



Watching the famous landings at Maho Beach



There are places that seem determined to be reduced to a photograph. In Saint Martin (Saint-Martin for France and Sint Maarten for the Netherlands), that image almost always features an aeroplane just a few metres above the heads of the sunbathers on Maho Beach. It is spectacular, of course, and it is hard to resist waiting by the sand for the next landing. But to focus solely on that scene would be to experience only a very small part of a much more complex island.

Saint Martin has a distinctive feature that shapes much of its character: it is divided between France and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The north belongs to the French collectivity of Saint-Martin; to the south lies Sint Maarten, an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The border, however, is barely noticeable. There are no customs posts or border controls, and you can cross from one side to the other almost without realising it.

The division dates back to the Treaty of Concord of 1648 and has ultimately created a unique coexistence in the Caribbean. The island covers some 87 square kilometres, enough to accommodate two administrations, two capital cities — Marigot and Philipsburg — French, Dutch, British and Caribbean influences, and an extraordinarily diverse population.

Long before any of these came Soualiga, one of the island's ancient Amerindian names, associated with the abundance of salt. And it is precisely salt that helps us understand much of its history.

The island of salt

On other Caribbean islands, it was the large sugar plantations that shaped the landscape and the economy. Saint Martin, in part, followed a different path. The historically limited availability of fresh water hampered large-scale agricultural development, whilst its salt pans provided an important source of wealth for generations.

Even today, the vast expanses of old salt pans around Philipsburg form part of the landscape. They no longer hold the same economic importance, but they serve as a reminder of a time when extracting, transporting and

trading in salt provided employment for a large part of the population.

Fewer buildings remain from the colonial past than one might expect. The hurricanes that periodically batter this part of the Caribbean have destroyed numerous old structures. History is therefore to be found in specific places, in certain archaeological remains and, above all, in the memories of its inhabitants.

One such place is the Emilio Wilson Estate, a former agricultural estate situated in the Dutch part of the island. Research carried out on the estate has uncovered evidence of an African slave settlement and allows us to trace part of the evolution of Sint Maarten's society since the colonial period.

Nearby, Amuseum Naturalis offers a different perspective on the island's past. Medicinal plants, wildlife, traditions, everyday utensils and little stories help us understand what life was like before the arrival of mass tourism.

Two capital cities facing the sea

Philipsburg is the most commercial face of the island. Its port is bustling with activity. Maritime and coastal, the shops and terraces benefit from a large share of the cruise passengers who dock at the nearby major port. The streets transform completely with the arrival of just one of those ships. On a peninsula between Great Bay and Little Bay, they discover the remains of Fort Amsterdam, initially erected by the Dutch in the 17th century. Today, they share prominence with a colony of brown pelicans that have found refuge in the vicinity.

In Marigot, the atmosphere shifts. The French capital maintains a more relaxed pace and a closer connection to French gastronomic culture. Fort Louis, built in 1789 to protect Marigot and the warehouses where valuable goods were stored before shipment, looms over the harbor. From its ruins, one can enjoy one of the best views of the bay. But perhaps the most intriguing way to explore recent history is by walking through the murals of Philipsburg.



1. - The peninsula between Great Bay and Little Bay, featuring the Fort Amsterdam
- 2.- Colourful parasols provide shade and a vibrant, photogenic backdrop for visitors in Philipsburg
- 3.- Traditional wooden Caribbean church design in Philipsburg



Some recall the salt mines; others speak of slavery, emancipation, and local traditions. The flamboyant tree appears repeatedly. This tree, whose flowering fills the landscape with a vibrant red, is a recurring feature. As part of the landscape, it is linked in popular memory to the abolition of slavery in the French part of the island in 1848. It also commemorates those who escaped from the Dutch territory in search of freedom on the other side of the island. The sculpture of Lady Liberty, a woman holding a lamp, keeps that memory alive.

A culture made up of many cultures

Sint Maarten has for years been known by the nickname 'The Friendly Island'. The expression clearly has a tourist angle to it, but after travelling around the island, it is easy to see where it comes from.

Here, families of Caribbean origin live alongside people from France, the Netherlands, Latin America, the United States, India and China. English serves largely as a common language, even in places where French or Dutch is the official language. This mix is particularly evident in the cuisine.

'Johnny cakes' are one of those humble dishes that say far more about a place than some sophisticated restaurant menus. They are small fried flour cakes, golden on the outside and soft on the inside, which can be eaten on their own or stuffed. Served with cod, they are one of the island's classic snacks.

At the other end of the spectrum is the obvious French influence. Saint-Martin is full of bakeries, patisseries, cheeses and imported goods that you could easily find in any town in France. Added to these are spicy Caribbean sauces, fresh fish, guavaberry — a fruit traditionally used to make liqueur — and popular drinks such as peanut punch. Even stepping into a supermarket is an intriguing experience: French shelves sit alongside Caribbean, American and Latin American products.



1. – Flowers of the Flamboyant tree, also known as the July Tree or the Tree of Liberty
2. – The Maho Beach experience: the best food with views
3. - The Bar Bomb
- 4.- Johnny Cake





A mural depicting traditional dresses, a symbol of Saint Martin's heritage

Few scenes better illustrate what it means to live on an island geographically situated in the Caribbean, yet culturally connected to several continents.

Viewing Saint Martin from the sea

Saint Martin is best understood when you leave the road behind for a few hours.

On the French side, the Nature Reserve protects some of the island's most important ecosystems, including mangroves, coastlines and marine areas. Established in 1998, it covers some 3,060 hectares and also protects several nearby islets.

Among them is Tintamarre, a small, currently uninhabited island off the north-eastern coast. Sailing there allows you to discover another side of the Caribbean. The seabed is clearly visible beneath the water thanks to the extraordinary clarity, and the seagrass beds provide food for the turtles.

All you need is a pair of goggles and a snorkel to start exploring them. With a scuba tank, you'll also come across corals, sponges, rays and a few shipwrecks and old anchors that bear witness to the rich maritime history of these waters.

The mangroves play another crucial part in our relationship with the sea. Though they lack the immediate appeal of a sandy beach, they are essential for protecting the coastline, providing shelter for numerous species, and limiting the effects of erosion and storms.

From above, the geography changes once more. Rainforest Adventures occupies part of the Emilio Wilson Estate, allowing visitors to ascend to the island's higher reaches. From there, you can see bays, hills, lakes, and a coastline that seems much longer than the maps suggest. Among its attractions is the Flying Dutchman, billed as one of the steepest zip lines in the world.



Diving with turtles



Planting Mangroves

More Than Just Maho Beach

Naturally, you must visit Maho. Rarely has an airport turned the landing of an aircraft into a tourist attraction. The runway at Princess Juliana International Airport begins practically right by the sea, and planes descend at very low altitude over the beach before touching down. When it looks like one of the great airliners, with hundreds of mobile phones pointing skyward. The scene lasts barely a few seconds. Then it's worth continuing. BuBook a small restaurant where they serve Johnny Cakes. Sit facing the port of Marigot. Walk through Philipsburg after the cruise passengers have gone. Navigate to Tintamarre. Enter a French bakery. Watch the old salt pans at sunset.

PorquThe true uniqueness of Saint Martin lies not merely in the fact that it comprises two countries on a small island.

It lies in the realisation that, after nearly four centuries of sharing the same territory, the administrative borders carry far less weight than all that its inhabitants have in common.

The Great Glacier Aletsch

Text: Joaquín del Palacio - joaquinaeografo@gmail.com

Photography: Swiss Tourism



CEach summer evening, the horizon darkens as night approaches, spreading shadows across much of the sky. Storms gather, and by nightfall, rain falls, nourishing the verdant carpet that blankets these slopes with lush vegetation, a tapestry of meadows and forests.

The village of Fiescheralp, with all its little wooden houses, is set amongst green summer meadows or white ski slopes in winter. A natural balcony perched at 7,290 ft, offering a bird's-eye view of part of the Swiss canton of Valais and the Rhône Valley. Other similar villages, such as Riederalp and Bettmeralp, are situated in a similar way, though they offer different panoramic views.

In another dimension

From a height of one kilometre, the Rhône resembles a stream, and the Glacier Express – the panoramic train that travels through Switzerland's finest Alpine landscapes – seems to be running on a model railway, winding its way through the forest or pulling into Fiesch station. To the south, the peaks flanking the valley mark the Italian border. Against this horizon studded with jagged peaks, many Alpine mountains can be made out, dozens of miles away, and in the distance some are recognisable, such as the Matterhorn or Monte Rosa, both over 13,000 feet high.



THE GREAT GLACIER ALETSCHE

Almost everything you can see, apart from the peaks, was covered in ice millennia ago, during the last ice age, when the ice was around 6,500 feet thick. Today, many glaciers remain, but they are retreating, resisting rising temperatures that inexorably melt them, condemning them to disappear altogether.

To the north, just behind Fiescheralp, lies the 9,603-foot Eggishorn peak, accessible by cable car up to an altitude of 9,413 feet. It is another vantage point from which to look across to the other side and catch sight of the greatest Alpine colossus, known as the Aletsch Arena because of its curved shape and surface moraines, which resemble the athletics track of a stadium. A fascinating sight.

This ice giant lying in the valley is approximately 12.4 miles long and 0.9 miles wide, has a maximum depth of 2,625 feet and is called the Great Aletsch Glacier. It contains enough water in solid form to provide nearly two pints a day to every person on Earth for more than three years. But the heat is taking a heavy toll on it, and as it melts, its waters flow into the River Massa, a tributary of the Rhône.

Between the ice and the sky

Its nourishment comes from snowfalls in four tongues that form at around 13,123 feet near the Jungfrau, Mönch, and Eiger peaks. These converge at Konkordiaplatz, where the depth is 2,625 feet. This union causes several lateral moraines, formed by rocks dragged along the edges, to shift to the center; thus, this giant has dark lines in its middle. These are its badges, the more, the greater the colossus.

The highest railway station in Europe is the Jungfraujoch, and the cogwheel train ascends almost entirely through a tunnel carved into the Eiger rock, protecting the tracks from extreme weather and reaching the **Sphinx Observatory** at 11,332 feet, above the permanent snow. Very few places on Earth are as privileged and accessible: the loading area of a glacier.



The weight of the accumulated snow turns it into ice, which compacts and turns blue, slowly sliding down the valley at about 591 feet per year. Apart from its birth, here also the upper part of the tongue and, down the valley, the curve of the Aletsch Arena are perceived.

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001 and expanded in 2007 for its natural, historical, sporting, and tourist importance, the Aletsch Arena and Jungfrau region are a unique alpine environment.





Feeling the glacier

The best way to experience it is to get close, but the best experience is to walk on its surface. Although it appears smooth from a distance, its relief is very abrupt and has many cracks, called crevasses. You must dress appropriately, wear crampons, and be roped up for safety against crevasses and uneven terrain. With each step, the sound of metal piercing the ice accompanies you, and around you, many rocks that the ice carries on its surface are visible. Darker rocks absorb more heat and sink into the ice, surrounded by water. If there is enough, it will flow, join others, and form small streams that will leap through cracks or small chasms, where something unique is visible: glacial blue.

If you stop, the silence will envelop everything. Perhaps the wind will roar or you will hear internal, dull, metallic sounds indicating that the colossus is moving. Very slowly. Its inhabitants are also silent and meticulous, glacier fleas whose metabolism produces a kind of alcohol that prevents them from freezing. This ecosystem generates its own climate, low temperature, low relative humidity, and the cold wind that slides down the valley.

Being easily accessible, it is ideal for scientists to study its variations, its progressive diminution, and to try to prevent what seems inevitable: its possible disappearance in a few generations, but we can still enjoy it.

The snowflakes that fell at its head over a century ago reach the end of the glacier. Their carrying capacity and size diminish here, where the surface darkens from the concentration of debris and absorbs more heat, its ineluctable enemy. Slowly, it melts, and the blue ice turns into transparent tears. The Aletsch mourns in silence.



LEGEND OF THE *SEAS*

The Mediterranean aboard the legend of the seas

Text: Rosario Alonso - **Photograph by:** José Antonio Muñoz





The new giant of Royal Caribbean turns the ship itself into a destination: 1,198 feet long, eight spacious neighbourhoods, seven pools, the largest aqua park at sea, and a programming of shows that elevates the concept of entertainment to another level.

LEGEND OF THE SEAS

E Legend of the Seas, the third ship in Royal Caribbean's revolutionary Icon class, clearly belongs to that category of vessels that are the journey themselves, transcending their role as mere transport for their passengers

Su's arrival at the Mediterranean in summer 2026 was one of the highlights of the season. On 25 June, he made his first port call at Cadiz, having been launched from the Finnish naval shipyard Meyer Turku, and four days later, on 29 June, Malaga served as the venue for his international presentation. From there, he set sail towards Civitavecchie, Rome's port, embarking on a four-night inaugural voyage for media, professionals, and guests. His first European commercial voyage will take place on 4 July from Civitavecchie.

The sight of Legend is striking even before boarding: around 1,198 feet long, 250,000 GT and 20 decks high. Make the term "cruise ship" seem inadequate. It boasts 2,805 staterooms and can accommodate 5,610 passengers in double occupancy, with a maximum capacity of around 7,600 guests. In addition, there are approximately 2,350 crew members.

But numbers alone do not capture its true scale. The full extent of the Legend of the Seas is revealed only by exploring its vast expanse.

Eight neighborhoods not to miss

One of the great successes of the Icon class is its departure from the idea of a ship as a series of decks to transform it into a true floating city. The Legend is organized into eight neighborhoods, each with its own distinct personality: AquaDome, Central Park, Thrill Island, Chill Island, Surfside, Royal Promenade, The Hideaway, and the exclusive Suite Neighborhood.

On decks 5 and 6, you will find **Royal Promenade** Social heart of the ship. It's a great interiors Avenue with focused shops, bars, cafes, restaurants and a good share of nightlife. There are Sorrento's, Pearl Café, Giovanni's Italian Kitchen, Playmakers Sport Bar, Thorn & Thistle pub, Boleros, Dueling Pianos and the strike 1400 Lobby Bar. The famous kinetic sculpture The Pearl, formed by thousands of mobile pieces, also presides over this space and constantly transformed its appearance.



The pearl, situated on the Royal Promenade
Central Park is a stroll through natural plant life with even the sound of birds





The zip line on the upper deck
The largest water park on a cruise ship

The deck 7 It is mainly dedicated to Surfside, the neighborhood designed for families with young children. Pools, water games, Splashaway Bay, Baby Bay, Playscape, and relaxation areas allow you to spend nearly the whole day there without having to move around the ship.

In the **deck 8** One of the most distinctive places emerges: Central Park. Over 30,000 natural plants transform this open space into something like a suspended garden above the sea, with restaurants, terraces, and live music. It is probably the place that best demonstrates that a megacruise does not have to be nothing but a succession of swimming pools, slides, and activities. And then comes the section where the Legend truly lives up to its name.

Thrill Island: where adrenaline is the star

The upper decks host some of the most spectacular experiences. On Thrill Island, spread mainly across decks 16 to 20, you'll find **Category 6**, Royal Caribbean's largest water park at sea. It features six thrilling slides that turn a ride into a theme park experience: twists, drops, and moments of weightlessness. Among them are Frightening Bolt, Storm Surge, Hurricane Hunter, Storm Chasers, and Pressure Drop, the first open-air freefall slide on a cruise ship.



LEGEND OF THE SEAS

In the same area, you'll find **Crown's Edge**, a combination of an aerial walkway, obstacle course, and suspended adventure at 47 meters above the sea; Adrenaline Peak, the climbing wall; FlowRider, the surf simulator; Lost Dunes, a mini-golf course, and Basecamp.

One of the great paradoxes of the Legend is that its vast size could suggest an impersonal space, but its zoned layout gives each area its own distinct identity.

Seven pools, seven ways to live the sea

Water is another of the Legend of the Seas' standout features. With seven pools and ten jacuzzis, each is tailored for a different type of passenger and mood. The star is Royal Bay, the largest pool at sea, located on Chill Island. Nearby, The Cove Pool offers a more tranquil setting with a infinity-edge design.

The highlight is Royal Bay, the largest pool at sea on Chill Island.

Adjacent is The Cove Pool, a more serene option with an infinity-edge design.

For those seeking a more adult experience, The Hideaway offers an infinity pool suspended over the sea, providing a particularly striking view. And on the sixteenth

floor, Swim & Tonic features a pool with a bathing area and a bar submerged underwater.

Passengers of the suites also enjoy the exclusive space of The Grove Suite Sun Deck, located on decks 18 and 19, featuring a pool, a whirlpool, and an open-air restaurant.

For families, Surfside includes Splashaway Bay and other kid-friendly aquatic areas. The result is a genuine variety of atmospheres: from the animation and music of the central areas to corners where one can simply sit, look at the Mediterranean and let the afternoon pass.

However, the big show is in the evening

If I had to pick one aspect where the Legend of the Seas stands out, it would be their entertainment.

The offer isn't confined to a main theater. The ship boasts three large performance spaces, featuring Broadway shows, original productions, ice shows, water shows, acrobatics, live music, and comedy. The quality and variety of the shows is one of the vessel's strongest arguments.



The big premiere is Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, the musical based on Roald Dahl's work. It is staged at the Royal Theater and marks this Broadway production's debut at sea. The ever-changing sets, the Oompa Loompas, Willy Wonka, and technological effects transform the theater into something more akin to a grand theatrical production than a traditional cruise show.

And that adds America's Got Talent LIVE on Legend of the Seas, which brings for the first time a live version of the popular TV format directly to a ship's stage, featuring magicians, musicians, acrobats, and artists from the universe of Got Talent.

If traditional theaters weren't enough, the AquaTheater, integrated into the impressive AquaDome at the prow, offers a type of performance difficult to imagine on solid ground. Dancers, acrobats, and aerial artists perform over a scenic pool with a cascade of around 16.7 meters serving as the backdrop. Light, water, sound, projections, and special effects are combined to create authentic action shows.

In Absolute Zero, the giant ice rink of decks 4 and 5, professional skaters perform shows like Fusion. It is, moreover, the largest ice rink installed by Royal Caribbean on a cruise ship.

And when the big shows are over, another function begins: the music. Boleros bring Latin rhythms; Lou's, jazz; Thorn & Thistle, pub atmosphere; Dueling Pianos, public participation in karaoke style; Music Hall, live music; and The Overlook, with its views of the Mediterranean, offers a panoramic view from the AquaDome. The company describes eight spaces for direct music listening and more than ten different ways to enjoy the night.

A culinary city

Getting onboard the Legend doesn't just mean choosing between a buffet or the main restaurant. The ship offers 28 different dining establishments, and there are over 40 options spread across restaurants, bars, and food and drink areas.

Among the new offerings, Royal Railway – Legend Station stands out as an immersive culinary experience that recreates a journey along the ancient Silk Routes. The five-course menu weaves culinary references from China, India, Persia, Turkey, and Italy,



Charlie and the Chocolate Factory



Absolute Zero and the Fusion Show



Hollywoodland Supper Club, an upscale restaurant inspired by the golden age of Hollywood



Restaurant Royal Railway, a gastronomic journey by train along the Silk Road

Hooked Seafood, a restaurant specializing in New England-style fish and shellfish

while technology creates a seamless dining experience. A sense of being on a train. Hollywoodland Supper Club offers something completely different: a night inspired by Hollywood's golden age, featuring jazz, cocktails and a multi-course menu conceived as a theatrical experience.

At the AquaDome Market, six stalls allow you to travel gastronomically around the world without leaving the ship: Cajun cuisine, Mexican flavors, Spanish tapas, Korean specialties, French juices, and crepes.

For a more informal dining experience, Sorrento's serves up delicious pizza, while El Loco Fresh, Surface Eatery, Windjammer, Park Café, and Pearl Café offer a range of casual options. Pearl Café even serves coffee and snacks all day. For those preferring table service restaurants, classic options from Royal Caribbean include Chops Grille, Izumi Hibachi & Sushi, Giovanni's Italian Kitchen, Hooked Seafood, and the Dining Room.



Sleep is also part of the spectacle

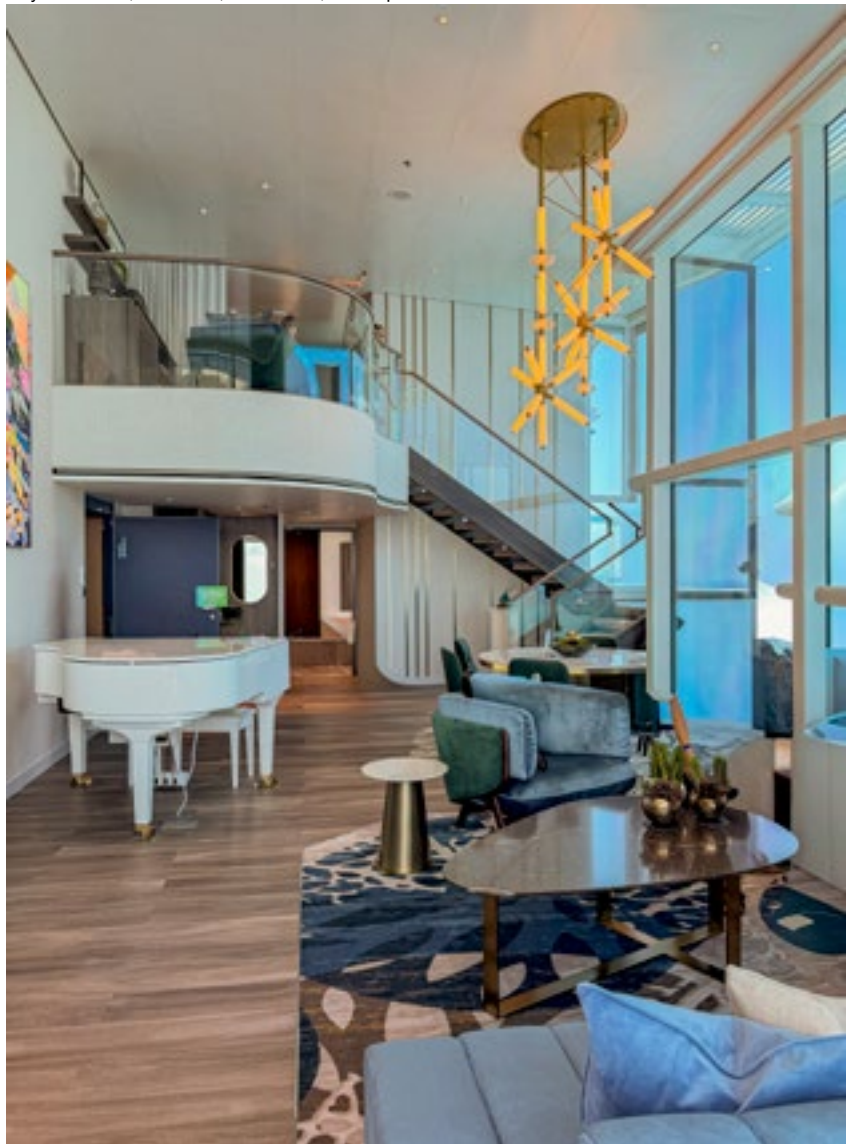
Two thousand eight hundred and fifty-five cabins span from interior. Rooms range from cozy to spacious suites, with balcony options, sea views, Central Park views, or Surfside views, and various suite categories.

Among them, the Ultimate Family Townhouse stands out especially. A spectacular three-story house designed for up to eight people, it features a terrace, private jacuzzi, private cinema, an American-style kitchen, and its own slide. Its direct connection to Surfside makes the suite a private extension of the family neighborhood. At the other end of the spectrum, even the most basic cabins enjoy a contemporary and functional design.



Outside cabin with balcony

Royal loft suite; two floors, mezzanine, and expansive terraces





Izumi Hibachi & Sushi Restaurant
A spacious and well-equipped gym



Confectionery shop in Surfside, featured on deck 7

A grand two-story casino



The Mediterranean as a setting

This summer's added attraction is that the entire universe sails through the Western Mediterranean. The routes are mainly from Rome-Civitavecchia and Barcelona with seven-night tours that combine Spain, France and Italy. The scale includes Palma de Mallorca, Marseille, Barcelona, La Spezia, Civitavecchia / Rome and Naples, while some rotations have been built into Alicante or Málaga.

Each port adds a counterpoint to the ship's protagonism

In Barcelona, the Sagrada Familia, Gothic Quarter, and the Ramblas allow for a blend of architecture, culture, and cuisine. Palma de Mallorca boasts the Cathedral, the historic center, and the Bellver Castle, as well as the opportunity to explore the beaches or the island's coast.

Marseille is the entrance door to Provence, to Vieux-Port, to Le Panier and to excursions to Aix-en-Provence or Cassis. At La Spezia, usually by boat landing, great attractiveness is the possibility to visit Cinque Terre, Portovenere, Pisa or even Florence.

Civitavecchia is the maritime gateway to Rome. The Colosseum, the Vatican, the Trevi Fountain, or the historic center transform a mere stopover into one of the great excursions of the journey. And Naples offers the chance to explore its historic center, Pompeii, Capri, or the Amalfi Coast.

The peculiarity of the Legend is that, even in a itinerary packed with legendary names, it's tempting to stay on board. That's perhaps its best card.

A vessel in itself, the destination

Early passenger feedback has confirmed something that was already suspected before its debut: the Legend of the Seas is not simply a means to reach certain ports. It is a floating tourist destination. The Legend of the Seas does not aspire to compete with the Mediterranean; rather, it offers passengers the choice of disembarking to explore Rome, Marseille, Barcelona, or Palma... or staying on board to discover half the ship still holds new wonders to reveal.

After its Mediterranean summer, the Legend will set sail for Florida, where it will begin its Caribbean season in November. But its European debut has already left an impression that is hard to forget: that of a colossal ship entering the Mediterranean not as an observer, but as one of the major players of the 2026 summer season.



Child-friendly zone with games, shops, and entertainment





Access to the Knights' Cloister, Ms Maria la Real de Nájera

La Rioja

AMONG MONASTERS, VINES, AND KITCHENS

Travels are often remitted by a monument, a landscape, and sometimes by a mean. In La Rioja, it's hard to separate one from the other. Here, history has been wild through monasteries, pilgrim routes, vineyards, workshops, and kitchens.

Text and Photography: Rosario Alonso and José Antonio Muñoz

In La Rioja, the story was built with monasteries, roads, vineyards, workshops and fires. A tour **Cañas, Nájera, Ezcaray** and **Arnedo** permits discovering that, beneath the apparent diversity of its landscapes and villages, there is a common thread: the Spanish Riojan people's ability to transform the passage of time into heritage, culture, and pleasure.

On paper, the journey might seem like a collection of disparate places: a Cistercian abbey, a monastery where kings rest, a church-fortress, a shoe museum, or caves dug into the mountains. However, a mere stroll through them reveals that they all speak, in their own way, of the same thing: **From memory and the capacity of a land to turn them into the present.**

Because La Rioja isn't just wine, but it would be absurd to ignore that the vineyard is one of its great arguments. It's also stone, water, wool, leather, roads, monasteries, agriculture and kitchen. It's a land where the activities that have been necessary for centuries to survive have been transformed, with the passing of time, into part of their identity. The journey begins in **Cañas**, in the heart of La Rioja Alta and starts as best as possible: by slowing down.



Fronting the Church of Santa María la Mayor of Ezcaray

Entrance to the Cloister of the Knights in St. Mary the Real of Nájera



Cave of the Hundred Pillars in Arnedo





Cañas Monastery



Claustrum of the Monastery of Candles

Cañas, first stop

The Stone That Keeps Silent

The Abbey of Roes is a place where it pays to enter slowly. The Cisteran monastery has its roots in the 12th century, when in 1170, Philip Díaz de Haro and his wife, Aldonza Ruiz de Castro, donated the villages of Cañas and Canillas to found an Abbey there. Its construction spanned centuries, and one can reveal different phases, from Romanesque remains to Gothic and later styles.

But beyond dates and styles, what strikes you is the sense of permanence. The stones still bear the marks of the masons who worked them. It's a small, almost domestic detail, but profoundly revealing: those who built that structure knew they were constructing something destined to outlive them.

They did not leave mere walls; they left their anonymous signatures. Canas appears to be one of the key elements of this journey. **The Riojan landscape is best understood by what remains.**

Monasteries were for centuries centres of spiritual, economic, and cultural life. Around them, much of medieval life was organized. And the traces of that world still follow the roads of Rioja. In fact, there is even a Monasteries Route that connects Nájera with San Millán de la Cocola and Roes, a test to how these buildings are part of a shared historical landscape. From Roes to Nájera, the journey leads to another of Rioja's great historic conditions.



Urraca Díaz de Haro (1192-1262) at Rods Monastery

For centuries, the monasteries were centres of spiritual, economic, and cultural significance. Their legacy can still be traced through the Riojan roads. The route connections Roes with Nájera and San Millán de la Cogolla.

Najera, next stop

When history has proper names

Canas invite silence, but the Monastery of **Santa María la Real de Nájera** compels you to look up, back, and most important, within, to its rich history.

Its origins track back to 1052 when King García Sánchez III and his wife, Stephania de Foix, ordered its construction. From the start, official history and legendary intertwine: the monarch is said to have found an image of the Virgin in a cave along a lily paid, a bell, and a lamp. The foundation of the monastery is linked to this mystical episode. The monastery was linked to that episode.

The choir, from the 15th century, and the cloister complete a complex that blends Gothic, Renaissance, and the memory of a monarchy that made Najera one of its power centres. Numerous noble tombs are also found, especially those of the Haro family, in the Knights' Cloister.

The choir, in late Gothic style, stands out for the richness and detail of its carvings. Its sturdy wooden seats, impressive in their own right, feature carved figures of saints, religious figures, animals, fantastical

There is something even more powerful than the legend: the human remains that lie there

Royal Pantheon within the church



Royal Monastery of Santa María la Real de Nájera



beings, and scenes of everyday life. This contrast between religious themes and more curious or even humorous elements reveals that these monasteries were inhabited by humans with feet firmly planted in the mundane, in the day-to-day.

The choir, in late Gothic style, is notable for the richness and detail of its carvings. Its robust wooden seats, impressive in their own right, feature carved figures of saints, religious figures, animals, fantastical beings, and scenes of everyday life. This contrast between religious themes and more curious or even humorous elements reveals that these monasteries were inhabited by humans with feet firmly planted in the mundane, in the day-to-day. It is hard to remain indifferent to the crypts. Perhaps because they remind us that behind monumental history, there were people, families, ambitions, alliances, and deaths. The monastery is, in this sense, much more than a religious building: it is a stone archive.

It's hard to remain indifferent to the cenotaphs. Perhaps because they compel us to remember that behind the monumental history were people, families, ambitions, alliances, and deaths. The monastery, in that sense, is much more than just a religious building: it is a stone archive.

And also a place of passage. Nájera is linked to the Camino de Santiago, and its history has been built, in large part, around those who arrived, stayed, or continued their journey. This itinerant character has persisted to this day. As Santiago and his story have been built, in large part, around those who arrived, stayed, or continued their journey. That itinerant spirit remains to this day.

Ezcaray, the next stop

The story hits the streets

En Ezcaray changes the setting. Here, the story is not confined solely within a monument, but is uncovered by walking around the village. Strolling through the hamlet allows one to understand that villages are not mere decorations. The houses, squares, shields, and buildings speak of those who wielded power, those who laboured, and the activities that helped the valley thrive.

Sta. María la Real summarize much of that story. The imposing exterior building was constructed mainly between the 15th and 16th centuries and boasts powerful Gothic architecture. It was designated a national monument in 1967. Its interior features vaulted ceilings, the choir, and a rich artistic heritage including the coats of arms of former lords of Ezcaray; they were more than noble lords; they were important merchants who wanted to reflect their power on the facades of their houses.

But Ezcaray has another story to tell, and that is the story of his work.

For centuries, sheep farming, wood, iron, and especially cloth production, formed part of the valley's economy. The existence of water and good pastures helped foster a textile industry that would eventually achieve notable importance.

Santiago's Path Through Vineyards © Daniel Acevedo



It's a small detail that helps us understand something fundamental: **The Riojan heritage is not solely made up of churches and monasteries; it also includes traditions.** And occupations inevitably lead to the table, for in Ezcaray one can stroll through history and end up seated in a restaurant where that same tradition takes on a new form. **Casa Masip** a cozy accommodation is also located in this establishment, where the kitchen is part of that immersive experience of the territory. And very close by, **Enliven Tradition**! It represents another of the major gastronomic references in the area. The dining experiences, the numerous bars or restaurants in Ezcaray, are undoubtedly some of the most prominent attractions of this village. **Portal de Echaurren** The hands of Francis Paniego, with his two Michelin stars, are the best example of his extraordinary importance.

Country cooking from Rioja doesn't need much explanation. It's based on recognizable ingredients, a garden produce and a tradition that knows how to coexist with contemporary cuisine. Vegetables, meats, legumes, cod, lamb and, naturally, wine form a repertoire that changes with the seasons; the importance of the garden, the meats and the traditional lamb chops roasted on a willow stick stand out. In other words: here, they eat history too.



Bicycle scumbag. Santiago's Pilgrimage Route
Views of Ezcaray and its central square



St Mary's Major Church of Ezcaray





Interior of the Cave of the Hundred Pillars in Arnedo

Arnedo, next stop

Beneath our feet and all around us

If the journey needed an unexpected twist, Arnedo provides it; and first you need to descend.

The Caves of a Hundred Pillars one of the most surprising places in the valley of Cidacos. Beneath the Hill of San Miguel stretches a complex of excavated spaces in the rock, whose origins date back to the Middle Ages, when instability in the valleys led people to seek refuge by digging directly into the soft mountain scree. In medieval times, it is likely to have housed, perhaps, the ancient **Monasterio of San Miguel** although this is not documented to be true.

Many have subsequently used these highly fragile caves as refuges and living spaces, up to barns, pigeon lofts, pigeon houses, wine cellars, medicinal plant dispensaries, and storage facilities. In Arnedo, the tradition of inhabiting caves will continue until the mid-20th century.

After visiting grand monasteries, entering a space excavated in the mountains produces a completely different feeling. Here, architecture is not built by adding stone, but by removing it. It is another way of inhabiting. And perhaps it is also another way of understanding history: not everything important is visible. Pero Arnedo has another story, much closer and still alive: the story of the footwear.

Panoramic view of Arnedo





Exterior of the Hundred Pillars Cave in Arnedo

The Shoe Museum results in pleasant surprise precisely because it shows that industrial heritage can be as revealing as monumental. The museum goes through the evolution of an activity that has one of its origins and that later passed through artisan shoes and skin work to become a modern industry. The connection with the One hundred Pillars is even visible in the museum's own design, using formal references to caves.

Here the past is not confined to a showcase. **Se transforma.** Yesterday's pits end up transformed into contemporary design. The small family workshop leads to an industry capable of selling its products far beyond La Rioja. And that evolution sums up very well the spirit of this journey.

It's not about preserving the past as a piece of a museum, but making it useful for the present.

Ardena Footwear Museum



Sleep and dine among the vineyards

There is another way to experience La Rioja: sleep within it

In Train, the **Finca de los Arandinos** proposes a very different experience. The building blends a wine cellar, hotel, restaurant, and spa into the midst of the vineyard landscape. The project was born from a family with a tradition in viticulture and has become a bet on reviving the value of old vines and building around them a new way of understanding enotourism.

Here appears another interesting contrast from the journey. After passing through medieval monasteries and historic peoples, one finds itself with a contemporary architecture designed by Javier Arizcaren and with interiors with David Delfin. The straight lines, glass and concrete have a dialogue with vineyards and olive trees around the building. It's not a breakup with history but another way to continue with it. La Rioja has been doing the same for centuries: seizing what she has at hand and transforming it. Before that they were the stone, water, water or cereal and today they are also wine, design, tourism and gastronomy.

At Finca de los Arandinos that idea reached a particularly clear expression: you can sleep, eat, rest and get to know the world of wine without abandon. The landscape

that makes it possible. Its **restaurante Tierra Bet** on Riojan products of proximity and contemporary character cuisine.

Cooking as Memory

Arriving at this point, gastronomy leaves behind its role as an accompaniment. Journey to become one of the protagonists. In Arnedo, a table in **Sopitas A** restaurant nestled within a breathtaking cave allows you to continue exploring that Rioja culinary tradition that blends products, tradition, and a contemporary interpretation.

It's hard to imagine a more Rioja scene. The sarmiento, which for months had formed part of the vineyard, ends up in the fire. And over that fire, the meat is cooked. The vine, which had already yielded grapes and wine, reappears on the table in a different form. **That's perhaps La Rioja's perfect metaphor.** Nothing is wasted. Everything has a second life. The earth produces, man transforms, and the table returns the result.

Spanish cuisine, in many ways, is a cooking of utilization, of produce, and of memory. The vegetables from the garden, the meats, the stews, the traditional sweets, and the wines form part of a cultural heritage that doesn't need to be behind a glass case because it continues to live.

Roast Patatas Riojanas



Finally, the water.

Every journey needs an end, and this we find in **Arnedillo**. After so much stone, so much history, so many miles and so many meals, the last day demands something different: a halt.

El **Balneario de Arnedillo** offers exactly that: thermal water, treatments, and relaxation. But even here, the same element that has accompanied the entire journey reappears: wine. The vinotherapy treatments combine products related to grapes and wine with the thermal waters of the spa. One of them includes a massage with grape extract and polyphenols oil, followed by. While enjoying a glass of Rioja, a spa bath awaits.

Because La Rioja's true wealth isn't just about how many monuments she keeps or about how famous her wines are internationally. It's something less visible and perhaps more important: **Continuity**. A continuity of cultivating, cooking, working, receiving the traveler, and telling stories.

The Abbey of Cañas speaks of a community that built stone to last. Najera recalls the power and memory of kings. Ezcaray keeps the prints of his words and his old jobs. Arnedo shows that an artificial tradition can become an industry without losing its roots. And the wine goes through the whole path as a Red Thread, from the vineyards to the table and finally to the rest.



View of Arnedillo from the Cidacos River

That's why perhaps La Rioja is a destination best appreciated slowly

One must enter their monasteries, walk through their villages, listen to those who know their stories, and sit down to eat, allowing the landscape to accompany us. No makeshift. One unique grand experience is missing, for here the experience is made up of many small things. A marked stone by a potter, a medieval tomb, a family shield, a street in Ezcaray, a cave dug into the mountains, an old espadrille, a burning vine under a jacket, a Rioja glass, and finally, the water of Arnedillo.

Perhaps that sums up the journey best:

Rioja isn't a place where the past's been put back. Here we have to know how to look at the landscape, listen to the stones and sit at the table, gastronomy and wine are part of the journey.

Tapa Cojonudo



<https://lariojaturismo.com/>



Lleida

When autumn sets the pace

Text: Staff Writer - **Photography:** Aralleida

Paraglide over Àger © Sergi Reboredo





E The Pyrenees and the lands of Lleida are a territory to explore in parts, allowing each comarca to set its own pace. In autumn, when summer has already left behind the long days and the roads become quieter, the territory appears with another light. It is not a spectacular or easy light. It is cleaner, lower, more rural and more mountainous. A light that helps us see better.

Between the highlands of the Pyrenees and the flat lands, Lleida offers many ways to travel. There is the Lleida of the high valleys, the lakes, and the forests. There is the Lleida of the stone villages, the Roman churches, and the belltowers that still order the landscape. And there is also the agricultural Lleida, dry in some stretches, fertile in others, marked by olive oil, fruit, wine, and that cooking that springs from what is close at hand.

The journey can begin in the capital, by the Segre, with the Seu Vella dominating the city from above. Few silhouettes explain a place better. The ancient cathedral retains a strong presence, almost military in its stance, but also a beauty worked by the hands of time. Ascending to it on a cool morning has something of an ancient stroll: the city lies below, the plain opens up around it, and one understands that Lleida has always lived looking towards the path, the river, and the horizon.

LLEIDA

From the capital, the map opens to very different comarcas. The most extensive Nùgera houses heritage, quiet peoples and some of the best sky to observe the stars. In the fall, as dusk before and air's usually clear, that experience gets a different sense. Ager and his surroundings, with his looks and his flight tradition, have an extensive geography of rock, sky and silence.

Further to the north, the Pyreneus leridan changes the tone of the journey. The National Park of Aiguapertes i Estate of Sant Maurici, only national park of Catalonia, is one of the great mountain landscapes of the country. In fall, their forests lose the green uniformity of summer and start showing another range of colours. There are lays, water in motion, trains, rock and a calm that isn't always found in high season. It's a place to walk without wanting to cover everything.

The pallars Jussà has a more dry and mineral force. Their parades and their walls and their roadsThe mountains imbue the journey with a natural frontier feel. In contrast, the Pallars Sobirà is more closely linked to rivers, mountain villages, and the peaks that look towards the Pica d'Estats, the highest point in Catalonia. These regions are well-known for active tourism, hiking, cycling, climbing, and wild waters, but autumn also offers a different perspective.



Els Encantats @ Sergi Reboredo

Fallas in Sant Climent de Taüll, Boí Valley © Oriol Clavera





Nature also gives us the performance of the seedling. Between mid-September and mid-October, male purps resound at the national hunting reserves of Boumort and Alt pallars, at the nature parks of Alt Pirineu and Cadí-Moixeró and at La Val d'Aran.

At the Vall de Boí, the Romanesque forms part of the landscape with an unusual nature. His churches, declared as World Heritage, do not seem to be separate pieces of his territory. They are where they are to be: with the peoples, with their mountains, with their narrow and their stone walls. Visits them out of the most advanced days allow them to better understand their scale, their silence and their old relationship with the life of the valley.

But Lleida doesn't end up at the Pyrenees. At Les Garrigues, the Rupestre Set of the Roca de los Moros of El Cocul recalls that these lands were inhabited and observed long before castes and churches were built. At La Segarra and L'Urgell, the medieval fortresses and villas speak of border, defence and power. At El Solsonès, Solsona preserves a historic centre with character, of those that walk slowly, looking at portals, squares and facades with no need to seek great effects.

There's also a more quiet beauty in open landscapes. At El Pla d'Urgell, Lake Ivars and Vila-sana have become a good place for monitoring gaves.

View of the Sant Maurici Lake. Aigüesnutes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park





Rafting on the Noguera Pallaresa River © Toni Grases / Photoset

The dry lands of Mas de Melons and the confluence of the rivers Segre and Cinca offer another way to experience nature. Not everything here is mountainous or picturesque. There are low horizons, fields, paths, silence, and a rural life that retains its own pace.

The table helps to conclude the journey. Lleida makes itself understood very well. its products: the oil of DOP Les Garrigues, the wines of the DO Costers of Segre, the pear of Lleida, the cheeses and mandatillas of L'Alt Urgell and La Cerdanya. The fall's a good time to get close to a winery, visit a mill or sit at a restaurant that works with the earth's calendar. When the product's good, you don't have to wear them too much.

The Pyrenees and the Terres de Lleida possess a quality often overlooked: diversity without losing character. From the Pyrenees to the plains, from Romanesque to popular architecture, from rivers to dry streams, from wine to olive oil, from ancient history to villages that still live their own lives. In autumn, all of this reveals itself with less urgency. And perhaps for that reason, it is better understood.

It's not a place to mark off a list. It's a territory to explore in parts, allowing each county to mark the journey. That's where much of its charm lies: in that discreet, firm, and very much its own way of welcoming the traveler.

Lleida





Dairy in Adrall © Mireia Rodriguez Moriana
Ivars and Vila-sana Lakes © Carles Fortuny





Poet's View © Munro-Leaving-Go Foundation

Cantabria

LAND OF PATHS

Text: Staff Writer - **Photography** - Lebaniego Foundation

Four historic routes connect the sea and the mountains, including the Jacob's Way and the Santo Toribio de Liebana Monastery, showing a region long marked by the passage of pilgrims

EIn County of Cantabria, walking also encompasses more than just the journey itself. It is a way of experiencing the territory. The trails wind through cliffs, seaside villages, valleys, forests, and mountains that eventually fill the horizon. Along these lands, four historical routes traverse both pilgrimage and the very essence of Cantabrian identity.

The Camino of the Coast follows the coastline and is part of the historic **Camino de Santiago**; the **Camino Lebaniego** starts in San Vicente de la Barquera and leads to the Monastery of Santo Toribio, where the Lignum Crucis is kept. Other routes include the **Medieval Lebaniego Path**, which connects Santander with the interior through the Pasiegos valleys, and the **Camino Olvidado**, one of the ancient Jacobean routes, whose route passes through the Campoo comarca.

Each path offers its own unique landscapes and stories, yet they all allow you to explore Cantabria at a leisurely pace, taking in churches, monasteries, villages, and ancient paths at every turn. Under the slogan «Cantabria walks, walks, Cantabria», the **Foundation Camino Lebaniego** brings together these four routes in an invitation to discover the region on foot, from the Cantabrian coast to the Picos de Europa mountains.

pilgrimage routes of Cantabria



Camino Lebaniego
Overlap stitch



Camino Olvidado
Church Flooded with
Villanueva de la Rosa
© Ricardo L. Blanco



Medieval Pilgrimage Route
St. Roman of Moroso Hermitage

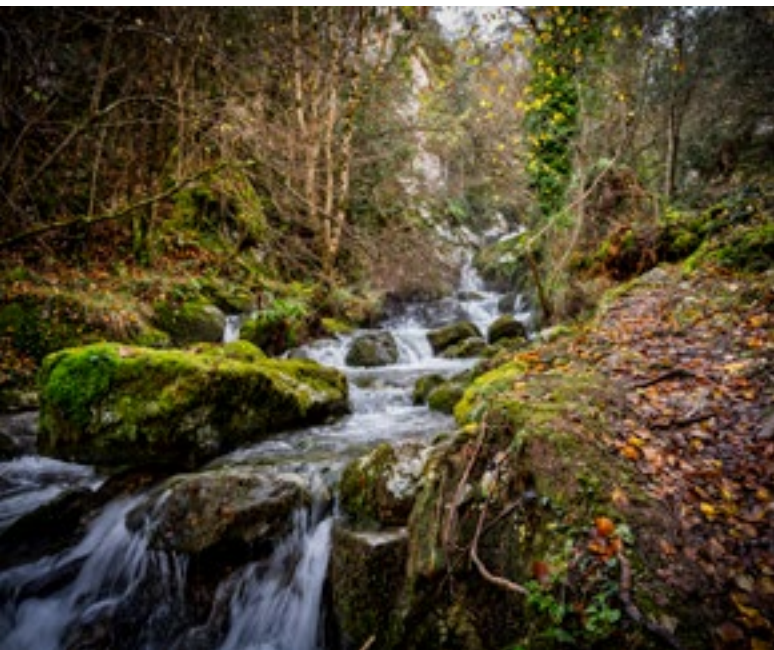


Route of the Coast
San Vicente de la Barquera

Camino Lebaniego

From the Coast to the Picos de Europa

The Lebanese Way links the Cantabrian Sea with Santo Toribio de Liebana through valleys, gorges, and villages nestled benefits the jobs of the Picos de Europa.



Rebejo River © Fundación Camino Lebaniego
View of Potes © Camino Lebaniego Foundation

The Lebanese Way begins by the Cantabria Sea, in San Vicente de la Barquera, and gradually challenges its way through the mountainous landscape of Cantabra. From Muñorocarrero, the route follows the valley of the Nansa, passing through places as Cades and Cicera before reaching the Hermida Gorge, one of the great natural attractions of Liebana. Lebeña and Cabañes mark the entrance to a region surrounded by the jobs of the Picos de Europa. Next comes Potes, the historic centre and main town of the valley, before the final step to the Monastery of Santo Toribio de Liebana.

The monastery houses the Lignum Crucis, considered the largest fragment of the True Cross still in existence, and is one of the great pilgrimage destinations of Christianity. The end of the journey here holds a special significance. After days of forests, rivers, and mountains, the pilgrim arrives at a place marked by silence, history, and a religious tradition that has endured for centuries.

The monastery houses the Lignum Crucis, considered the largest surviving fragment of the True Cross, and is one of Christianity's great pilgrimage destinations. Ending the journey here carries special significance. After days of forests, rivers and mountains, pilgrims arrive at a place shaped by silence, history and a religious tradition that has endured for centuries. As the largest surviving fragment of Christ's Cross, the relic makes Santo Toribio one of Christianity's foremost pilgrimage sites. The journey ends with a special sense of purpose.



Camino Medieval Lebaniego

From Santander to the inland Cantabria

The Camino Medieval Lebaniego begins at the cathedral in Santander and recovers an ancient route of communication between the coast and the interior valleys. The first few kilometers leave the urban landscape behind, leading to Villaescusa and then entering the Pasiegueiro region. Puente Viesgo marks one of the highlights of the route. From here, the path continues through Anievas, leading into a Cantabrian landscape of small villages, pastures, huts, and paths that were used for centuries by traders, travelers, and pilgrims.

The itinerary also passes through Tudanca, a village closely tied to local literature and traditional mountain life in Cantabria. The route then continues to meet the path leading to Liebana and the Santo Toribio monastery.

This ancient route retains the character of medieval paths, designed to connect regions and facilitate travel between the coast and the interior. Walking it allows one to discover how the Cantabrian landscape changes in just a few kilometers, from the bay of Santander to the more secluded valleys of the region.

Starting from Santander Cathedral, this old route passes through Villaescusa, the Pas Valley, Puente Viesgo, Anievas, and Tudanca before leading towards Liebana.



Gothic cloister of Santander Cathedral
© Medieval Pilgrimage Platform - PLACAM

St. Roman of Moroso Hermitage © Platform of the Middle Way - PLACAM



Route of the Coast

The Cantabrian Sea as a Travel Companion

Beaches, cliffs, estuaries, and fishing villages accompany the pilgrim on this stretch of the historic Camino de Santiago that runs along the coast of Cantabria.

The Camino de la Costa goes through Cantabria following one of the great historic pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela. The sea remains close for much of the journey and marks the character of an itinerary with cliffs, beaches, rivers and old seaside villas.

The route allows one to discover an essential part of the Cantabrian heritage. Along the way, medieval churches, houses, bridges, and villages are encountered whose history has been intertwined with fishing, ports, and maritime trade.

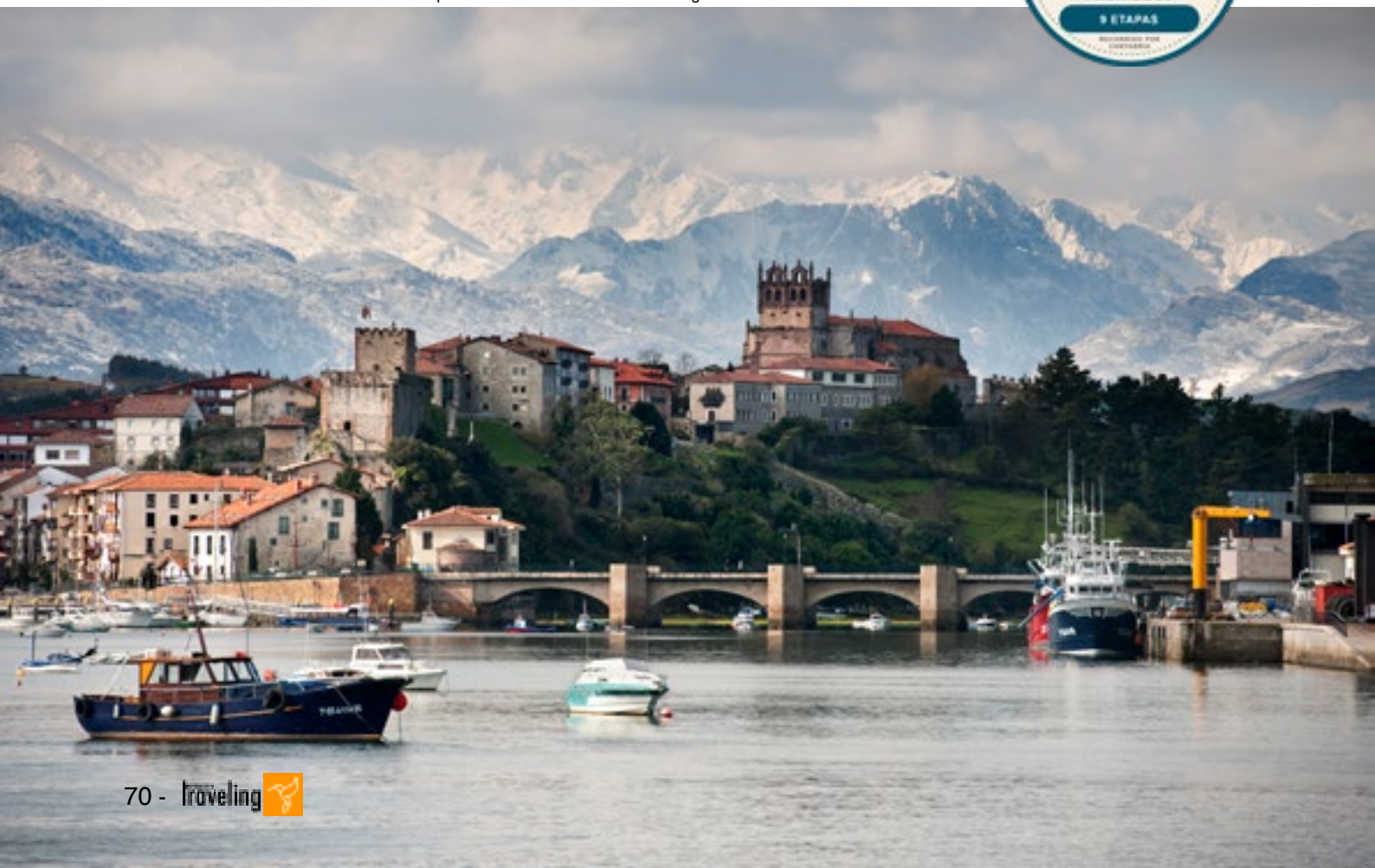
The landscape also reminds us of the long human presence in this territory, visible in its caves and in the important legacy of cave art preserved in the region. It is an open and luminous path, with the horizon of the Bay of Biscay accompanying the pilgrim for hours. Nature and history appear always very close, without the need to leave the path.

Here, Cantabria offers one of its most recognizable images: villages raised up against the water, green pastures that stretch almost to the sea, and a rugged coastline that changes with every step.



Gaudí's Capricho in Colillas

View of San Vicente de la Barquera © Fundación Camino Lebaniego



Camino Olvidado

The ancient route of the first pilgrims

Before the French Way became the main route to Santiago, some pilgrims visited more northern itineraries to advance protected by the mountains. The Forgotten Way regains memory from those medieval tours.

The route begins in Bilbao and reaches Cantabria through the Campoo region. Along its route are places like Arija and Olea, surrounded by forests, pastures, and mountain landscapes. Romanesque churches are one of its principal attractions and serve to remind us of the territory's importance during the Middle Ages.

It's a less crowded route than many other Jacobean pilgrimages. That tranquility allows for stopping in the villages, observing the landscape calmly, and finding stretches where you hardly meet other walkers.

After crossing Cantabria, the path continues to Villafranca del Bierzo, where it joins with the French Way. More than an alternative, the Forgot Way is a way to get back a little known page from the Jacobean pyramid and to ride the peninsula north far from the most advanced routes.



The Forgotten Pilgrimage Route traverses Campoo, passing through mountain landscapes and Romanesque churches, following the ancient paths trodden by medieval pilgrims.



Sanctuary of Our Lady of Montesclaros, the Ebro Reservoir in the background
© Miguel A. de Arriba

Church submerged in Villanueva de la Rozas © Ricardo L. Blanco



El Ripollés

The culture inscribed in stone,
woven in wool, forged in iron,
and etched in memory

Text: Rosario Alonso **Photograph:** Rosario Alonso and archive
Ripoll Abbey

E It is understood, beyond its landscape, by entering its churches, listening to its legends, tasting its products, and observing how its hands still work. It is mountainous, green valleys, paths climbing towards sanctuaries, and villages that have learned to live between cold, water, and stone. But it is also a region where history does not appear as a backdrop. In the center of the villages, in the monasteries, in the ancient crafts, in the workshops, and in that discreet way of preserving things without needing to turn them into spectacle.

The cultural journey through Ripollès can begin in... **RIPOLL** It almost needs to be done, not just because it is the capital of the region, but because there one of the great symbolic places of medieval Catalonia can be found: the **Monastery of Santa María de Ripoll** her presence orders the city. One arrives at the plaza and immediately understands that one is not facing another building, but rather a central piece of Catalan memory. The monastery was founded in the late ninth century by Count Wilfredo the Bald as part of the repopulation of the area. Over time, it became a first-rate religious, political, and cultural center.

The visit to the monastery allows you to read several layers of history. The most immediate is the stone: the basilica, the claustró, the Romanesque beacon. But behind that architecture appears a world of fundamental names. Wilfredo el Velloso, a founder figure in the Catalan conical tradition, Abbot Oliba, one of the great men of Church and culture of his time, Ramón Berenguer III and Ramón Berenguer IV, linked to the conical pantheon and later Bishop Josep Morgenes, an impetus for the restoration of the monastery in the 19th century. Ripoll isn't just a preserved monument but a place where an idea of origin has been preserved.

The Romanesque portal, from the twelfth century, is one of the great works of the ensemble. It has been described many times as a Bible in stone, and although the phrase is repeated, it helps to understand it. Here, sculpture does not serve a decorative purpose but a narrative one. The figures, scenes, and reliefs were conceived to teach, remind, and order the world before those who entered the temple. In an era when written word was not accessible to all, the carved image was also knowledge. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look at it carefully, rather than treat a visit as a succession of photographs.

The idea of Ripoll as a centre for written culture makes even more sense now. **Scriptorium** the experience of the medieval calligraphy workshop is simple and effective: it moves seamlessly from explanation to practice. One hears about manuscripts, scribes, Carolingian and Gothic scripts, ink, ruling, and patience; but until one picks up a quill and tries to write with it, one truly understands the slowness of that world. The gesture is humble. The hand makes mistakes. The ink does not always obey. And then one comprehends that a manuscript was not just a book, but a sum of time, discipline, knowledge, and faith.

Medieval monasteries were centers of worship, but also of preservation and cultural transmission. In their scriptoria, religious, legal, historical, and technical texts were copied. In Ripoll, this activity attained special importance. **The Ethnographic Museum of Ripoll** complete that vision, but it takes us to another realm. While the monastery and Scriptorium speak of high medieval culture, the museum brings us down to the world of trades, everyday life, and the worked mountain. There, tools and implements appear, linked to pastoral work, ironworking, domestic life, and local traditions. It is a necessary museum because it reminds us that culture is not confined to great names. It is also found in a carpenter's bench, a farming implement, a traditional eel trap, an ancient kitchen, or a custom passed down from parent to child.

This same continuity between territory and product is perceptible during a cheese tasting at Tastedeformatge in Ripoll. The experience, more than a strict gastronomic one, has a cultural reading. Cheese speaks of milk, of livestock, of pastures, of climate, and of small-scale productions. In mountain comarcas, eating is not a separate act from the landscape. What arrives at the table usually comes with a nearby explanation: a farm, a valley, a season, a way of maturing, a family tradition. When you taste a cheese from the area, you taste also a part of the rural economy that has kept the territory alive.

From Ripoll, the journey continues to... **SANT JOAN DE LES ABADESSES** a town marked by its monastery and a particularly significant history: that of a female community at the origins of medieval Catalonia. The monastery was founded by Wilfredo el Velloso and had as first abbess Emma of Barcelona, daughter of the Count. That's no minor. In a Middle Ages that are often counted through



Interior, claustrophobic and porch of St. Mary's Abbey, Ripoll



Scriptorium, recreation of the ancient monks' scriptural rooms in the monastery



male lineage, wars and pacts, Sant Joan retains in his own name the memory of a woman with religious, economic and territorial power.

The history of the women's monastery lasted until the early eleventh century, when the community of nuns was expelled. Popular tradition links this episode to tales of accusations, political tensions, and legends such as the Count Arnau, that "bad count" who appears in Catalan folklore associated with abuses, blame, and condemnations. It is always important to distinguish between history and legend, but it is also important not to dismiss the legend. In places like Sant Joan de les Abadesses, popular memory has shaped a part of the collective narrative. The abbey speaks of documents, power, and religious reform; the legend speaks of fears, punishments, and imagined justice. A stroll through Sant Joan de les Abadesses reveals how an abbey could shape the life of a village. Around it, streets, squares, trades, and dependencies sprang up. History did not confine itself to the temple; it extended towards the village. The monastic ensemble, with its understated architecture and spiritual weight, remains the focal point of the visit.



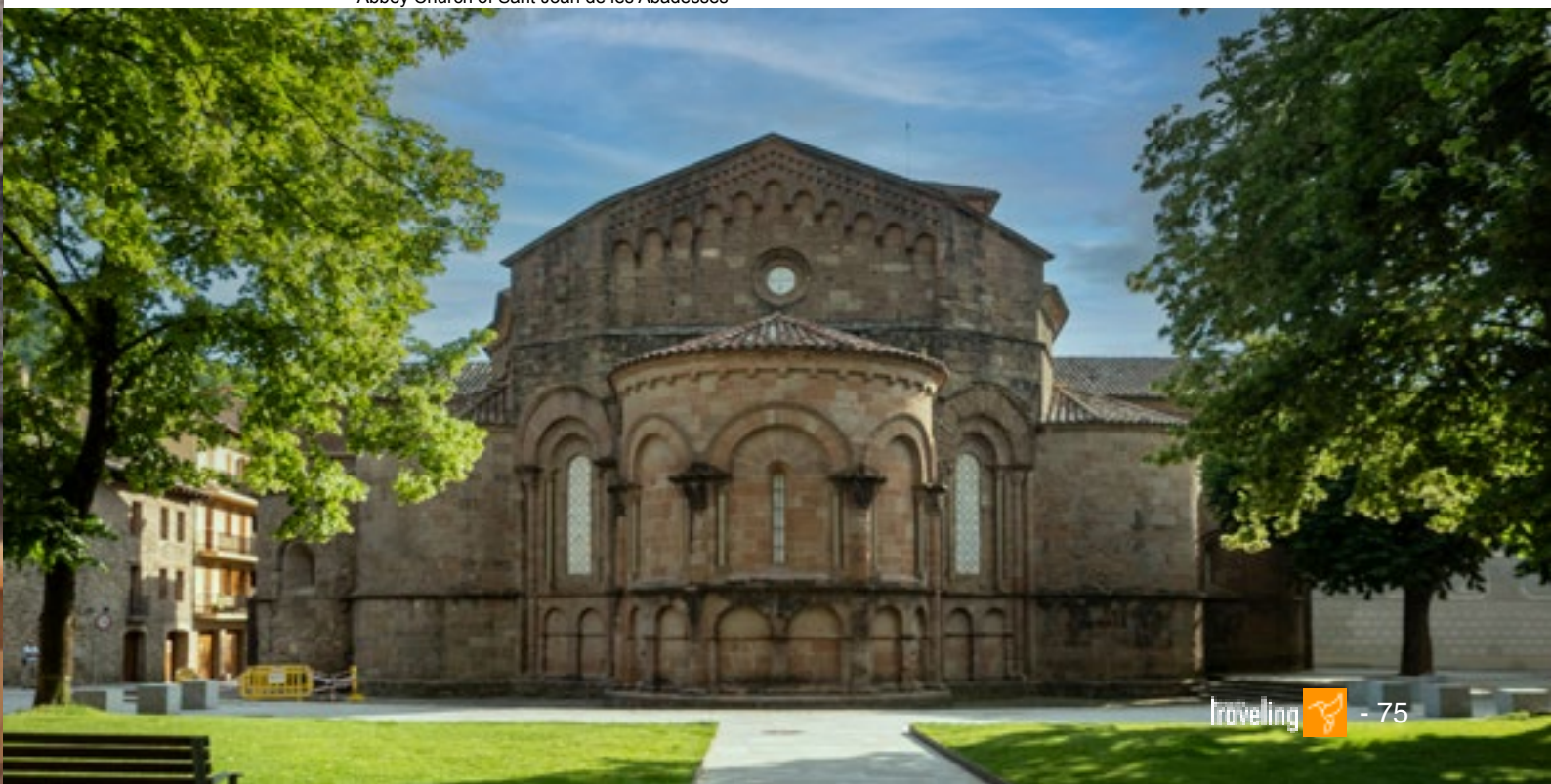
Old Bridge of Sant Joan de les Abadesses



Mosaic of azulejos on the facade featuring the abbesses

CAMPRODÓN offers a different perspective on the Ripollès. While Ripoll and Sant Joan look to the Middle Ages, Campodón speaks of the 19th century and the arrival of the bourgeois summer. Located in a wide fence and bleated by the healthy reputation of the mountain, Campodón became a retreat for upper-class families, especially those from Barcelona. In those years, the fresh air, the water, the roads, and the landscape were seen as remedies against urban fatigue.

Abbey Church of Sant Joan de les Abadesses



EL RIPOLLÉS



One of Campodorón's summer villas



Ward Road and River View

The bourgeoisie of Catalonia discovered Campdorón as a place to spend their Summers, build homes, socialize, and enjoy a more leisurely life. That all began with Dr. Bartomeu Robert i Yarzabal, a renowned Barcelona doctor who arrived in Campdorón in 1882 and quickly reminded the town to his bad Catalan patients and friends.

This past is still felt in the architecture and atmosphere of the village. Campdorón preserves medieval monuments as the Pont Nou, one of its most recognizable landmarks, but also shows the mark of a time when summer was a form of social distinction. The noble houses, the now-defunct Casino, the tree-lined walks, the gardens, and some legendary gangs recall that the mountain was, for decades, a summer retreat for the city. It isn't just about rest. It was also a way to be in the world, to build relationships, and to exhibit a modern sensitivity towards nature.

Among its most notable landmarks are the Pont Nou, the Church of Santa María, the former Monastery of Sant Pere, and the green spaces that invite walking. Campdorón is best enjoyed on foot, without seeking a single climax. Its essence lies in the combination of river, stone, facades, traditional shops, trees, and the memory of long summers. The charm lies in the blend of river, stone, facades, traditional shops, trees, and the memory of long summers.

View of Campdorón's bridges





Ward Road and River Ritort View

CAMPDEVÀNOL introduces another chapter: that of water and iron. The Centre pYRFER del Ferro i de l'Aigua, located at the Molí Gros, shows an industrial and artistic heritage that sometimes gets overshadowed by the monasteries. Nevertheless, in a region as the Ripollès, the history of iron is essential. Water powered Mills, forges, and machinery; iron provided jobs, tools, and economic activity. Where we now see a quiet landscape, there was once noise, efficiency, heat, hunger, and craftsmanship.

The Molí Gros, an old modern flour mill, serves as a starting point to explain the relationship between hydraulic power and human labor. The centre helps us understand how the territory was not just observed but used with intelligence. Rivers were not just a postcard: they were a source of power. Mountains were not just beauty: they provided materials, paths, and boundaries. MYRFER helps us see Campdevànol from a less ornamental and more authoritative perspective. The industrial heritage has this virtue: it reminds us that the beauty of a valley was also built through hard work. The industrial heritage has this virtue: it reminds us that the beauty of a valley was also built through hard work.

RIBES DE FRESER leads the journey to a smaller but very land-connected culture. LA BOTIGA DE LA MEL DE RIBES, run by pura Vall, allows visitors to give into the world of bees, Honey, and hyve-derived products. Honey, like cheese, encapsulates the landscape.

Facade of El Molí Gros



It depends on the flowing seasons, the direction of the goals, the health of the environment, and the natural warming. In a time when sustainability is often discussed abstract, these experiences explain it simply: without beings, without flowers, without care for the land, there is no Honey.

Ribes de Freser is also a gateway to the mountains and to the Vall de Núria, but in this journey, it's worth paying at the small workshops and cultural projects that give meaning to the visit. OVELLALAB, dedicated to woody, opens a window into the Ripollès sheet, an autochthonous shed of northeastern Catalonia whose history is linked to the crossing of Pyrenean and Merino sheet. The Ripollès sheet is not just a livesock bread. It is a piece of adaptation to the territory, to the pastures, to the climate, and to mountain economics.

Speaking of wool today also means speaking of a shift in perspective. For centuries, it was an essential material. It kept people warm, was woven, washed, carded, and knitted. After industrialization and the advent of synthetic fibers, it lost some of its everyday value. Workshops like Ovellalab allow us to reconnect with this material relationship. Seeing, touching, and understanding wool helps us reconcile with a manual culture that should not be reduced to nostalgia. Tradition, when worked well, is not a dead relic. It is a future possibility.

The journey finds one of its most special moments in **MONTGRONY** within the confines of Gombren. The Sanctuary of Saint Mary of Montgrony is situated in a particularly scenic enclave, on the rock, with that blend of isolation and protection that many popular devotional sites possess. The earliest documented mention of the sanctuary dates back to around the year 1400, although tradition speaks of an image found much earlier. As is often the case with mountain sanctuaries, the documented history and devotional narrative coexist without clashing too much.

Reaching Montgrony means understanding that not all religious spaces were chosen at random. The rock, the height, the path, the view, and the silence form part of the place's meaning.



Ribes de Freser Chapel

The chapel of Saint Mary, connected to Marian devotion, and the nearby Church of Saint Peter of Montgrony create a setting where the landscape is almost like architecture. It's not just about looking at a building; it's about grasping the connection between faith, territory, and effort. For centuries, climbing to a sanctuary was also a form of pilgrimage, a request, a thanksgiving, or a promise.

The Sanctuary Hostel adds another important element. In the 18th century, a building of hospitality was constructed around the sanctuary, part of the effort to make Montgrony a more significant place of devotion. The hostel recalls an ancient function: welcoming travelers, pilgrims, and hikers. In the mountains, hospitality was not a luxury but a necessity. Eating or resting in such a place helps us understand that sanctuaries were not just spaces of prayer but also waystations, refuges, and meeting points.

This journey through the Ripollès has a common thread: culture is not separate from life. Perhaps the Ripollès greatest cultural virtue is that it doesn't need to invent an identity for visitors. The region has had it for centuries. The comarca preserves great monuments but also small knowledges. And in that balance lies its interest.

The Ripollès is a region for slow travel. Not because there's a lack of things to see, but because each visit improves when seen with calm. The Monastery of Ripoll demands attention. The Scriptorium requires patience. Sant Joan invites us to reflect on the role of women in medieval history. Camprodon needs a walk. Campdevàl requires list to the water. Ribes de Freser is better understanding by touching the wool and tasting the Honey. Montgrony simply asks to climate, look, and be silent for a moment.

The Ripollès offers precisely this: a story written in stone, but also in crafts, products, and gestures. And perhaps for that reason, its culture feels so close. Because it's not presented as a closed lesson but as a conversation with the past.



Main altar of Saint Peter de Montgrony

Sant Pere de Montgrony

Virgin of Montgrony



Travel Notes

How to get there

By car. The most direct route from Barcelona is via the C-17, which takes about an hour and a half to Ripoll. From there, you can take the roads connecting to Sant Joan de les Abadesses, Campdevàrol, and the Vall de Ribes.

By train. The R3 line of Rodalies connects Barcelona to Ripoll, Campdevàrol, and Ribes de Freser, though there may be alternative road services due to ongoing works on the line. It's advisable to check the service status before your journey.

Where to eat/dine

Can Guetes · Ripoll

Local and seasonal cuisine at the start of the Ferro i Rog. A good stop before or after exploring the green. Can Guetes car park · Ripoll
Tel. 972 718 001

Restaurant S'ha Acabat, the Bròquil · Campdevàrol

Market kitchen with a creative twist on Catalan recipes. Fresh seasonal produce, expertly prepared risottos and well-crafted dishes. Campdevàrol
Tel. 972 604 495

Restaurant Santuari de Montgrony · Gombren

Mountain Catalan cuisine in a privileged setting, overlooking the historic Sanctuary of Montgrony and with magnificent views of the valley.

Where to Stay

Hotel Abbatissa · Sant Joan de les Abadesses

Small mountain hotel with just 14 rooms, surrounded by forest and offering views of Serra Cavallera and the Taga.
Tel. 872 208 678



Wind shelter · Ribes de Freser

A 17-room hotel with panoramic views of the Vall de Ribes, a pool, wellness area, and restaurant. An excellent base for exploring the Vall de Núria.
Tel. 972 728 866



EL RIPOLLÉS





The Black Lagoon

Machado and the Mystery of the Black Lagoon

Text: Jose A. Muñoz - **Photography:** Archive photograph



Un On a September morning, an envelope arrived at the office with no return address. Inside was an old photograph and two yellowed, ancient copies of a manuscript. The image showed several men beside a cart, surrounded by pines. The pages spoke of a father murdered by his own sons, lands plagued by greed, and a body cast into a bottomless lake. At the end were two initials: A. M.

"The poet listened to the story before writing it. The original leaves still remain in Vinuesa. I enquired about them, but I did not show the photograph."

A week later, I traveled to Soria. Not so much to track down a lost manuscript as to follow the path that Antonio Machado walked in 1910, when he left behind the city and ventured into the Pinares region to discover the sources of the Duero. That journey would end up in the Campos of Castilla.

Machado had been living in Soria for 3 years. He had arrived in 1907 to occupy a place as a French teacher and had been aware of the sobriety of the Plateau, the small villages and the long roads of the province. In the fall of 1910 she undertook an excursion with friends to the Picos de Urbion with the aim of knowing the sources of the Duero River. They came out from Soria at the stage that covered the Soria to Burgos and descended at Cidones. From there they continued through roads and paths, first by foot and then by horse, to Vinuesa and Covaleda and the heights of Urbion.

I followed that same address one clear morning. As the road moved far from Soria, the landscape lost the naked amplitude of the Plateau. The pines and, later, the first pines came up. The open lands were lagging behind and Urbion's silhouette began to be drawn on the horizon. From **Cidones** They continued on horseback, accompanied, according to their own prose narrative, by an elderly peasant. That she returned to her land after she fired two immigrant children.

Machado discovered more than just a landscape in the Black Lagoon. Its waters, the pine forests, and the tales of the region gave shape to a tragedy of greed and guilt that eventually became a legend.



St John the Baptist Church in Salduero

On his way, that man told him about Alvarzo and his old sons and his old man and his inheritance.

We don't know exactly what happened. The peasant could either have existed or been a literary creation based on different voices. The town council of Soria itself considers the legend a Machiavellian creation, likely fueled by news of crimes and family disputes that were circulating during his time in the province. What is certain is that the poet made the trip and that that landscape passed into his work shortly afterwards.

The path led then straight ahead. **The Wound** A town that still existed after Machado passed. Decades later was abandoned and covered by waters from the Retiro de la Corda del well. When water level goes down, his church tower emerges to the surface. The image inevitably turns out to be Machadian: a bell tower that returns from waters in a region where literature talks about bodies that have never come back from them.

The next stop is **Vinuesa** Known as the Pine Court. The villa still retains good stone houses, noble shields, wooden balconies, and large eaves. Its architecture reminds us of the prosperity achieved through carting, transhumant

Covaleda and the Duero River



grazing, and forest exploitation. **Our Lady of the Pine Church** Dominate the countryside, while buildings like the **Ramos House** And **Palacio de Don Pedro de Neyla** Allow me to understand that it was not a simple rural village.

The address on the envelope led me to a house close to the square. There, the two original sheets were kept. Before I could see them, I wanted to continue the journey.

De Vinuesa a **Salduero** The road advances alongside a young Duero. The river still lacks the breadth and gravity it will achieve when it crosses Castilla. It is a clear channel, accompanied by meadows, poplars, and small bridges. Salduero appears gathered between the water and the hill, with stone houses and chimneys beginning to smoke well before winter arrives.

Then appears. **Covaleda** In the pine forest, it is not just a scenic feature. For centuries, it has been a way of life. The woodlands, pastures, and communal uses explain the people's relationship with the sierra. The forest surrounds the houses, climbs up the slopes, and continues until altitude prevents its growth.

Macarthur circled Covaleda on horseback. Then, he climbed the hill on foot with the rest of the group, following their ascent. **Duero sources.** In the high areas of Urbion, pineapple pineapple leaves way to the heather, Piorno and the great canchal. The hikers were surprised by a storm and descended through the Rhinual valley to the **Laguna Negra** That arrival from the mountains, in the rain and mist, must have been very different from the orderly access that now leads from Vinuesa.

To reach the lagoon I have taken the road that goes back to the Rhinesan valley. The pineapple was soon closed to both sides. The straight and reddish logs let an irregular light pass through and under them they grew ferns and steels and some beech that began to take up the first tones of autumn. Near the Serrah Pass, the asphalt gave way to the path. The Black Laguna doesn't come across little by little. It appears at the end of the path, locked under the walls of an old glacier circus. The water isn't really black. It has a dark green colour that changes with light, shade and reflection of pines. The silence isn't complete as well: you can hear the wind in the cups, some water stream and steps onto the wooden catwalk.

For generations it was believed that the lagoon had no bottom and that it was connected with the sea by underground currents. In Machado's romance, that place became grave and punishment. The children of Alvarzo kill their father to share their lands and throw their body into the water with a stone tied to



Waterfalls at the □□ of the River Duero

their feet. Nevertheless, inheritance does not bring about the expected prosperity. The fields stop production and blame ends up leading the killers to the same lagoon.

I returned to Vinuesa in the late afternoon. The supposed notes of Machado were waiting for me on a table. A cursory read was enough to notice that they were not a neat draft penned during the excursion. The handwriting was too neat, and some phrases matched the prose version published in the magazine *Mundial* in February 1912. The pages were old, but newer than the text itself.

The explanation came up with a textbook from 1933. A student called Antonio Martínez had copied several fragments of *The Land of Alvarzo* as a calligraphy exercise. His initiatives were the same as his poet's. Separates from the notebook and aged by time, those pages had come to light as they were never.



Foto superior, a street in Vinuesa - Foto inferior, The Ramos House in Vinuesa



The finding did not bring an unknown manuscript but explain something perhaps more interesting. Just over 20 years after the excursion, Machado's work had already returned to schools and houses of the region. The story invented by the poet had been mixed with his old beliefs about the lagoon and became a legend that had been passed on for centuries. The next morning I saw Urbion again from the exit of Vinuesa. I understand then that the true track was not on those roles. He was on his way: **Cidones**, in the submerged village of **The Wound**, in the stone houses of **Vinuesa**, in the young Duero of **Salduero** and in the pines of **Covaleda**.

Machado didn't merely choose a dark place to set a crime. He traversed a comarca marked by the mountains, the land ownership, emigration, and stories told during long winters. **The Black Lake** gathered all that in a single stage. A century later, the traveler can still follow his steps and recognize the landscape that transformed a fiction into a legend and therefore into an immortal work.

This reportage contains a fictional narrative — the cover, the photograph, and the manuscript copies— built upon a real journey: *Antonio Machado's excursion to Urbión and the Black Lake in October 1910.*

View of the Black Lagoon



Eco destinations

La Gomera

The island that lives in balance

Text and photos: Clara Serrano Vega - claraserranovega@gmail.com

Sustainability in La Gomera is not a new concept. It is embodying in the island's path, the terraces carved into the cliffs, the villages, and the old forest that has stood for millions of years.

LTenerife is best explored on foot. While there are roads, it is the ancient paths that offer the truest understanding of the island. These paths lead out of the villages, cross ravines, and climb to the higher altitudes where the arid coastal landscape gives way to the humidity of the forest. For centuries, these were the routes connecting small settlements, orchards, and tiny harbors. Now, they form an extensive network of trails that allow you to traverse much of the territory at a leisurely pace.

The island was designated a biosphere Reserve in 2012. The protection covers its six municipalities - San Sebastian de La Gomera, Hermigua, Áculo, Vallepara, Valle Gran Rey, and Alajeró - and extends to the surrounding sea space. It's not just about preserving a beautiful landscape. It also protects a way of life in a challenging border with foot sloped, limited arable land, and historically difficult communications.

Garajonay, the fog-capturing forest

At the heart of the island lies the Garajonay National Park. Its laurisilva is one of the last subtropical forests that once covered parts of southern Europe. Laurels, heathers, ivy, and holly grow in perpetually humid conditions. Clouds, pushed by the trade winds, collide against the peaks, leaving droplets on the leaves. This is known as horizontal rain, an essential phenomenon in an island where water has always been scarce.

The laurisilva cover about 85% of the park and has one of its best-preserved areas in the El Cedro forest. Garajonay was declared a Nation-

LA GOMERA

al Park in 1981 and recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. Its value extends beyond the beauty of the landscape. The forest serves as a challenge for numerous endemic species, some unique to La Gomera or the Canary Islands.

The best way to explain it is by foot. Trails as those in El Cedro, La Laguna Grande, Las Greces, or the Alto de Garajonay traverse different park environments. Some are short and accessible; others require several hours, appropriate footwear, and some preparation. Before entering, stop at the Bowling Game visiting centre in Aculo. There, you can learn about the park's landscape training, montieverde flora, and the islanders' relationship with the forest.

Bancales against abandonment

Outside Garajonay, another landscape emerges, more cultivated and also more fragile. The banales occupy slopes that, from a distance, seem impossible to farm. On these terraces, potatoes, vines, cereals, fruit trees, and palms were planted. Each dry stone wall held the soil and made better use of water. Without this effort, life in many ravines would have been impossible. Today, however, many banales have been abandoned.

Maintaining traditional agriculture is a crucial part of conserving La Gomera. Caring for a garden, restoring a vineyard, or using a Canary palm helps preserve the landscape and keeps

some activity in the villages. It also reduces, albeit in a small way, the dependence on products from other islands or the mainland.

The traveller can contribute by buying local products. Gomera cheese, almogrote (a type of paste), palm honey, insular wines, potatoes, and traditional sweets come from this agricultural culture. Tasting them in small restaurants or purchasing them directly from their producers ensures that a portion of the expense stays in the island. Behind each product lies cultivation, recipes, and crafts that need to continue to survive.

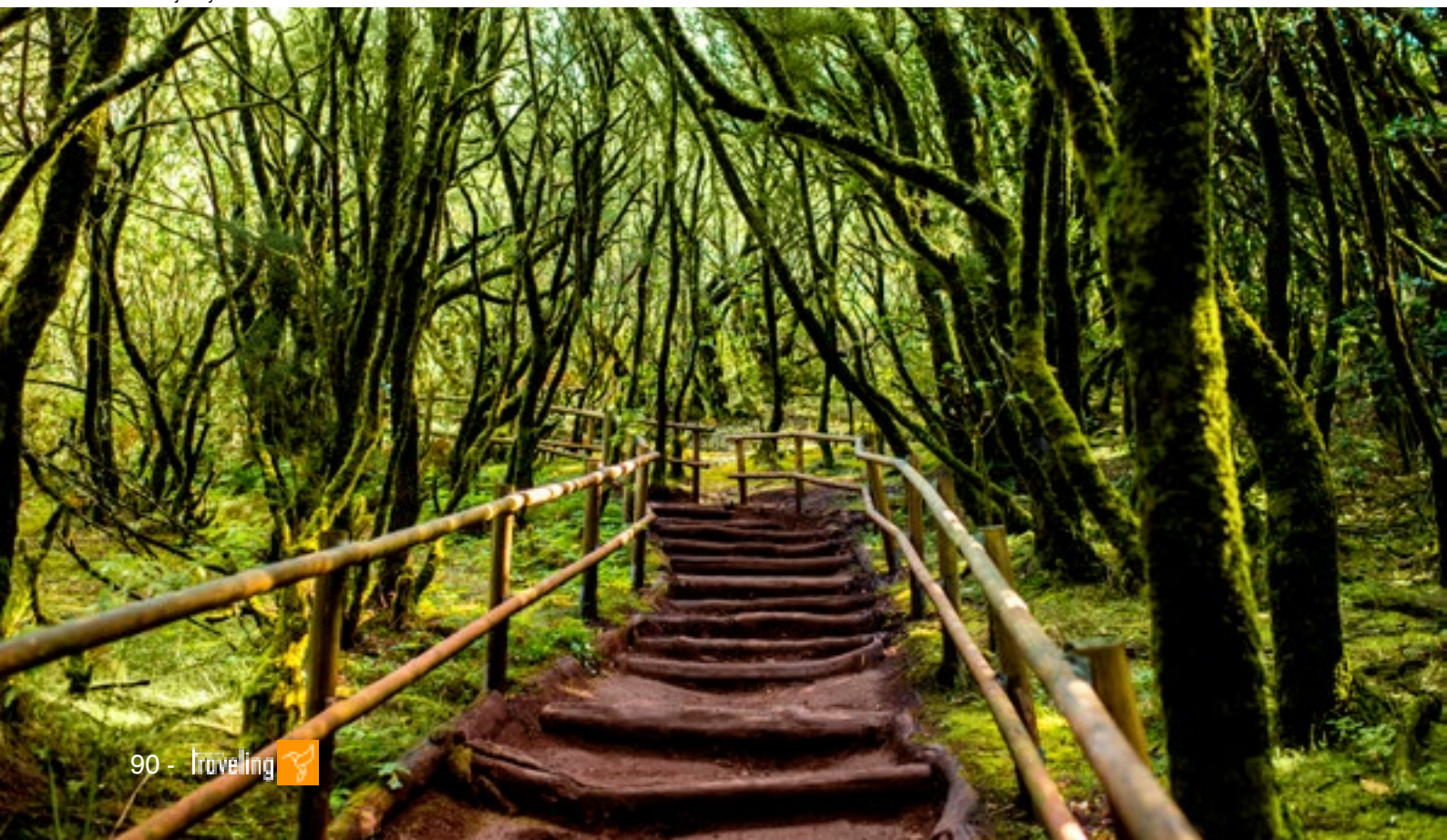
Communities connected by paths and whistled speech

Herme occupies a valley of banana trees that descend to the sea. Aculo sets on a natural plateau facing Tenerife, preserving quiet streets and traditional houses. Vallebeautiful opens between mountains, while Valle Gran Rey gathers ravines, palm groves, banners, and small beaches. Alajeró retains scattered pharmacies in the south. San Sebastian de La Gomera retains the memory of Christopher Columbus's stop before leading to the Americas.

Also emerging among the ravines is the Gomera whistled language. This whistled language allowed messages to be sent over great distances, from one slope to another, without having to descend to the valley floor. It did not arise as a tourist demonstration but as a practical solution to a complicated geography. In 2009, it was included by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and is now taught in the island's educational centres.

The whistled language shows that sustainability is not just about protecting forests or reducing waste. It also involves preserving knowledge, crops, words, and customs that were born here and still form part of Gomera life.

Garajonay National Park





Hermigua Valley

Travel with a light footprint

The stopover on La Gomera invites a few days to explore. This allows for visiting different municipalities and avoiding a rushing excursion from Tenerife. Staying in locally managed accommodation, boilling local guides, and shopping in small businesses helps the tourism benefit more people.

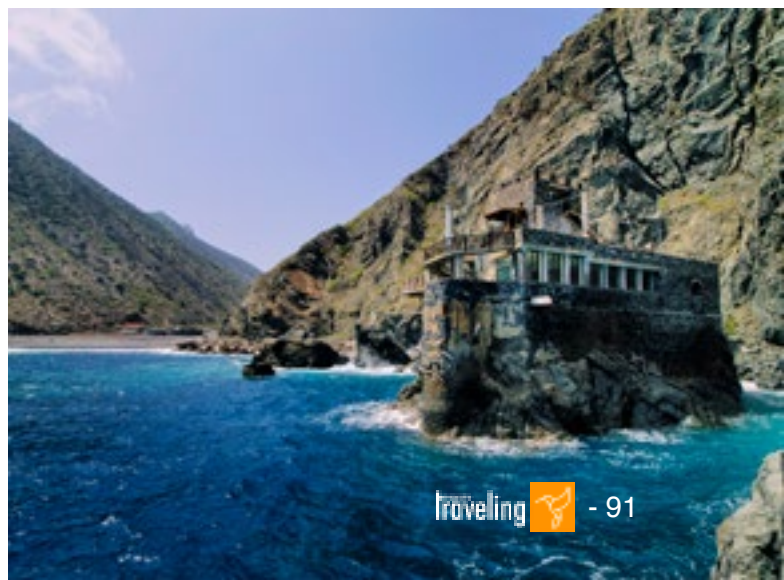
When on the trails, follow simple rules: stay on marked paths, do not uproot plants, collect your litter, and take extra precautions to avoid fires. Fire remains one of the greatest threats to Garajonay. It's also advisable to moderate water consumption and, whenever possible, avoid single-use packaging.

La Gomera is part of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Natural Areas. Nevertheless, its primary argument is visible. It lies in the path that still connect villages, in the banks that are still grown, and in the face that keeps the forest humid. The island has reached today conserving much of this heritage. The challenge now is to visit and continue to preserve its natural heritage intact.

Silbo Gomero Monument



Mar Castle



Aranjuez

A landscape worthy of your time

Text: Staff writer - **Photography:** Community of Madrid



Aranjuez Palace © Hugo Fernández



A Just forty minutes from Madrid, Aranjuez retains a heritage where palaces, gardens, orchards, and tree-lined walks form a difficult-to-find unity in any other Spanish city. Although many visitors come to spend the day, it takes two or three days to uncover everything that the ancient Royal Estate holds.

For centuries, Aranjuez was the spring residence of Spanish royalty. The presence of the Crown transformed this fertile plain, located between the rivers Tajo and Jarama, into an orderly landscape featuring gardens, canals, orchards, and long avenues. That dialogue between nature and human intervention prompted UNESCO to include the Cultural Landscape of Aranjuez on the World Heritage List in 2001.

The Community of Madrid has five locations recognized by UNESCO: the Landscape of light, in the capital, the Monastery and Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, the University and the historic centre of Alcalá de Henares, the Cultural Landscape of Aranjuez and the Hayedo de Montejo, the latter as Natural Heritage. Without this unique ensemble, Aranjuez occupied his own place for the extent and variety of his legacy.

The Royal Palace is the natural starting point for a visit. King Philip II ordered the construction of a residence here on top another ancient palace of the Masters of Santiago, although the current building is the result of successive expansions carried out during the 17th and 18th centuries. Its red brick and white stone facade hints at interiors where one encounters reception rooms (audience rooms for official and royal public life), historical furniture, and decorative arts.



Arabic Department © Belén Imaz

The Prince's Garden © Community of Madrid



Among its most famous quarters is the Porcelain Cabinet, created during the reign of Charles III and decorated with delicate pieces from the Royal Buen Retiro Factory. The Arabian Cabinet, inspired by the ornamentation of the Alhambra, stands out alongside the Throne Room, Isabel II's bedroom, and the Chinese Paintings Cabinet. They are not merely beautiful rooms: they allow us to understand how the daily life of a court, which moved to Aranjuez each spring, unfolded.

The palace is surrounded by over 111 hectares of accessible gardens, one of the largest palatial complexes in southern Europe. Its size advises a leisurely stroll. The Parterre Garden adheres to the French taste for geometry; the Island Garden, bordered by waters of the Tagus and an artificial ria, preserves some of the most valuable historical fountains. There, Hercules and the Hydra, the Crying Child and other mythological figures coexist among ancient trees.

Princely Garden, the most extensive, blends long avenues with small corners of romantic inspiration. Along its path lie the Narcissus Fountain, the Apollo Fountain, the Chinese Fountain, and the Clock Fountain. Nearby, the monumental Hercules and Antaeus Fountain greets the visitor, while the Ceres Fountain occupies one of its central spaces. The small Queen Victoria Garden, facing the city, completes this botanical map.

Within the Garden of the Prince stand two essential visits. The Royal Boat Museum preserves the recreation boats used by the monarchs for navigating the rivers and ponds of the Royal Sites. The oldest is a golden gondola commissioned by Charles II in Naples in 1683. Later comes the Royal House of the Fisherman, the refined palatial residence Charles IV had built as a retreat. Behind its relatively plain façade lie decorated chambers adorned with silks, marbles, stuccos, paintings, and bronzes.

Aranjuez doesn't end at the palace walls. The historic center's layout retains the imprint of the illustrated city. The Plaza and the Royal Chapel of St. Anthony form one of its most recognizable ensembles. Not far away are the Royal Carlos III Theatre, the Godoy Palace, the San Pascual Convent, and the market, still integral to the neighborhood's daily rhythm. The Plaza de Toros, built towards the end of the eighteenth century, also houses a museum dedicated to the local bullfighting history.

A second day allows you to get to know Aranjuez otherwise. They can navigate through the Tagus, look from a balloon at the geometry of garden and garden or walk the centre at the Chiquitre, an especially comfortable choice for families. The calendar adds two unique citations: the Globe Festival and the performance of the Aranjuez Mote, which recalls the events of 1808 through popular scenes and old-age characters.

The garden is another vital part of the cultural landscape. Asparagus, strawberries, strawberries, artichokes and tomatoes have made coastal cuisine famous. Restaurants such as Casa Pablo, Casa José, Aguatinta, Carême, Casa Delapio and A Terra Delapio interpret these products from traditional or contemporary approaches. The wine complete the table: Bodegas Real Cortijo and El Regajal allow you to get close to the wine, get to know the production and participate in tasting experiences.

The stay can still be extended in Chinchón and Colmenar de Oreja, two nearby locations with beautiful big squares, wineries and good tables. And the return to Madrid is simple: Aranjuez is connected with Cercanías, but in season the most evocative arrival remains that of the straight berry train. Travelling on this historic train Remember that Aranjuez was never an isolated monument but a place designed to stay, walk and enjoy time.



Plaza and the Royal Chapel of San Antonio © Belén Imaz



Roomies Cortijo © Belén Imaz

Strawberry Express © Belén Imaz



Aranjuez

<https://visita.aranjuez.es/>

The Flemish Beguines

and their legacy in the 21st century

Text: Rosario Alonso

Beguines at the Beguinage in Bruges © Copyright Michel Vaerewijck - Toerisme Vlaanderen

HThere was a time, between the 13th and 17th centuries, when the cities of Flanders saw the emergence of a way of life that discreetly challenged the social and religious norms of the era.

It was neither an open rebellion nor a head-on clash with the established order. It was something more subtle, more profound: a way of living on the margins without completely breaking away. Thus were born the Beguines, women who chose a middle path between marriage and the convent, and who, over the centuries, would go on to leave a quiet but lasting mark on European history.

The Beguines were not nuns. Nor were they married women. They were laywomen who chose to live in community, under a certain spiritual discipline, but without taking perpetual vows. This status afforded them a freedom that was rare in medieval Europe: they could leave the community if they wished, manage their own property, work and, in many cases, pursue an education. In a rigid society, where a woman's destiny seemed predetermined, their choice was as unusual as it was unsettling.

The phenomenon emerged in the prosperous cities of the former territory of Flanders, where economic and urban growth allowed for new forms of social organisation. Wars, the Crusades and epidemics had left a clear demographic imbalance: many women were left alone, either unable or unwilling to marry. In this context, life in a beguinage offered a respectable and, at the same time, autonomous alternative.

1. Autumn in Mechelen, Groot Beguinage © Stef Keynen

2. Beguinage – begijnenhuisje in Bruges © Toerisme Brugge – © Jan D'Hondt





Beguinage of Tongeren © David Peskens

Like small towns within the city, the beguinages comprised houses, vegetable gardens, chapels and workshops where women lived with a degree of independence that was rare in the Middle Ages. In Flanders, they took on particular significance, and several of them are now UNESCO World Heritage Sites

These communities were organised in their own spaces: the beguinages — or ‘beaterios’, in the Spanish tradition. They were veritable small towns within the city, closed off from the outside world, with rows of houses, vegetable gardens, infirmaries, chapels and, on occasion, workshops. Their architecture responded both to a functional need and to a spiritual conception of space: order, contemplation and communal living.

In Flanders, these complexes achieved a remarkable level of sophistication. Today, several of them are recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, not only for their architectural value, but for what they represent in terms of social and cultural history. To stroll through one of these compounds is, even today, to step into a time that has stood still. The lives of the Beguines combined work, prayer and service. Many devoted themselves to teaching, caring for the sick or helping the poorest. Others worked in the textile trade, which was fundamental to the Flemish economy. But beyond their social role, what defines these women is a form of intimate spirituality—less hierarchical, more inward-looking.

Some Beguines also left a remarkable intellectual legacy. Figures such as Hadewijch of Antwerp and Margaret Porete explored a direct relationship with the divine, outside the confines of ecclesiastical structures. Their writings, in the vernacular, spoke of love, spiritual union and inner freedom with



Evening stroll through the Beguinage de Groot © WillemGovaerts

an intensity that was rare for their time. They were not always understood: some of these voices ended up being persecuted by orthodoxy.

That fragile balance between acceptance and suspicion shaped the history of the Beguines. For centuries, they were tolerated and even valued for their social work. But they also aroused suspicion at certain times, especially when their spiritual practices strayed from official doctrine. Even so, their model endured, adapting to the changes of modern Europe.

The map of the Flamish Beguinages draws a discreet but extensive network spread across cities like Bruges, Ghent, Mechelen, Lier, and Louvain. In total, Flanders retains around twenty of these enclaves, though only a part has achieved international recognition. Elito arrives in 1998, when UNESCO included twelve Beguinages Flamencas in the World Heritage List, recognizing their urban uniqueness and, above all, their exceptional testimony to a separate female community in medieval Europe.

Among them are some of the most prominent: the princely Beguinage of Bruges, the Grand Beguinage of Malines, those of Ghent (both the ancient and Sint-Amandsberg), Lier, Tongeren, Cortrique, and, of course, the Grand Beguinage of Louvain.

Groot Beguinage © KevinFaгнаert





Beguine of Our Lady of Ter Hoyen, Ghent © Stad Gent Dienst Toerisme

Beguines of Leuven, riverside walk © Kevin Faingaert



Each has its own character. Brujas seduces with the purity of its pristine white houses aligned around a silent meadow; Gante offers a more complex evolution, with several enclosures showcasing different eras; Malinas impresses with its scale and economic past; and Lier, more reserved, retains a nearly domestic atmosphere.

If there is one city where this legacy is particularly evident, it is Leuven. There, the Great Beguinage — the Groot Begijnhof — is one of the best-preserved complexes in Europe. Founded in the 13th century and expanded in subsequent centuries, the site covers several hectares alongside the River Dijle. Its cobble streets, brick houses and inner courtyards create a surprisingly serene setting in the heart of a dynamic university city.

The Leuven Beguinage is not a museum. Today it is largely inhabited by students and lecturers from KU Leuven (the University of Leuven), which gives it a rare sense of living continuity. However, its urban layout, its façades and its atmosphere keep intact the essence of that female community which inhabited it for centuries.

Walking through its streets is to observe details that speak of another era: small niches, discreet doors, carefully laid-out inner gardens. There is no monumentality in the classical sense. Instead, there is a restrained, almost domestic beauty that evokes the everyday lives of those women.

The case of Leuven also helps us to understand the evolution of these spaces. Following the gradual disappearance

of the Beguines—the last of whom died in the 20th century—many beguinages were left empty or put to other uses. In Leuven, the restoration work begun in the second half of the 20th century prevented their deterioration and allowed them to be integrated into contemporary life without compromising their character.

Today, the figure of the Beguines resonates with unexpected relevance. At a time when alternative ways of life, personal autonomy and more horizontal forms of community are being championed, their experience takes on a new meaning. Not as an anachronism, but as a precedent. The Beguines did not make grand proclamations. They did not lead movements in the modern sense. But they lived, with consistency, a form of independence that was possible within their context. They chose not to conform to the usual moulds and quietly carved out a space of their own.

Perhaps that is why their story continues to resonate. Because it speaks of personal choices in times of rigid norms. Of communities that sustained themselves without absolute hierarchies, although there were clearly power structures. Of spirituality without imposition. And, above all, of women who, without grand gestures, blazed new trails. In the quiet streets of Leuven, amongst reddish bricks and unassuming gardens, that legacy lives on. Not as a relic of the past, but as an open question for the present.



Leuven Beguinage: a stroll along the river © Karl Bruninx

Aerial view of the Groot Beguinage in Leuven © Stad Leuven - Jan Crab





Finca de los Arandinos

Winery-Hotel

Entrena - La Rioja

Text: Rosario Alonso- photography by: José A. Muñoz

HThere are hotels situated in wine-growing regions, and some wineries have, over time, added rooms. Nevertheless, La Finca de los Arandinos stands apart. Here, the fourth star hotel and the wine were conceived as integral parts of a single project, and this is immediately apparent upon arrival in Training, in the Infrastructure valley. The building appears surrounded by vineyards, with the Sierra de Moncalvillo closing in the landscape.

The property is located on LR-137 Road, outside the urban area. In an exclusively agricultural setting. Vineyards, olive groves, and fields dominate what the eye can see. It is precisely that landscape that ends up inside the hotel thanks to an open architecture featuring large glass surfaces.

Architecture amidst the Vineyards

The architectural project bears the signature of the Riojano Javier Arizcuren. He designed a contemporary building in the shape of an L, with straight lines, concrete and glass, with some volumes that seem to protrude from the ground. He does not attempt to resemble an old wine store or reproduce traditional architecture that never existed. His approach is clearly contemporary, but he always seeks a relationship with the surrounding landscape. Another game starts inside.

A great part of interioring was performed by David Delfin and AKA Study. The Malaysian designer worked in ten rooms as well as in different common areas and at the restaurant, with vintage furniture from the 1950s and 1960s, unexpected objects and some of those details that characterized his creative unification.

Finca de los Arandinos has only 14 rooms, a figure that allows to maintain a small scale. They are divided into four categories: the rooms designed by David Delfin, those above the Barricas, the Junior Suite and the Suite. The most interesting to understand the spirit of the place are perhaps those that are closely related to Delphin's work. Some solutions require the guest to interplay with the furniture to discover the different uses of the stay. It's not just about putting some designer pieces into a conventional room. There's some intention to provoke curiosity and to break up with the usual distribution of a hotel (as a sink inside a closet).

A wine cellar beneath the hotel

But here comes the wine too – and above all –.

The cellar is part of the hotel itself and can be explored without leaving the premises. It is small, cozy, and practical, unlike the large industrial productions. It works primarily with grapes from the estate's vineyards and maintains a production model where the selection of the raw materials holds special importance.

The family has 16 hectares of vineyard spread around train. The strains grow between 500 and 600 metres high and above different forms of soil with a predominance of rolling edges and tidal glaciers. Some strains reach 60.



FINCA DE LOS ARANDINOS



1. Viero and Catay, a viura and a white tempranillo. Two of the whites produced by the winery.
 2. A view of the cellar from one of the rooms.
- Finca de los Arandinos, at an early age. paired with a warm langostino salad.

En ellas se cultivan **Tempranillo, Garnacha y Mazuelo** for the faint-hearted and **Viura y Tempranillo blanco** for the whites. The average yield does not exceed 6,500 kilos per hectare, and the harvest is carried out manually, with the grapes transported in 200-kilo crates. Typically, the Viura enters first, followed by Garnacha and Tempranillo, and finally the Mazuelo.

The scale of this project is well understood during the visit. No need for thousands of galleries or endless ships of deposits. Following the course of the prints, talking about ferments, wood and ageing and ending up with the Barricas, where the tasting usually takes place. The standard visit currently includes two wines: Old Viñas Viejas and Finca de los Arandinos Crianza.

The wines from Arandinos

The range is much broader than might be expected given the size of the cellar, and it allows you to explore different profiles of Rioja, from more classic elaborations to wines with a slightly more personal approach.

The Finca de los Arandinos Crianza perhaps represents its most recognizable feature: a Red where we seek to preserve the fruit and let the wood come with without mastering, with a balance thought to make the wine expressed and easy to understand.

Catay Reserva delves deeper into a more classic ageing process, with a greater presence of barrel aging, whereas Tempranillo Mazuelo blends the fruity profile of the first with the freshness and personality brought by the Mazuelo.





One of the hotel's facades overlooking the vineyards

The minor production of El Conjuero with an organic vineyard and with Tempranillo and Garnacha with fermentation and subsequent production of French and American oak wood. Also appears The Tejar, a Red with a greater structure and depth, or Natural malacapa, an Tempranillo with a sharply fruity profile fermented with natural yeasts and made with a more direct expression of the grapes.

In targets, Viero Viñas Viejas takes his place from old wines and looks for a fresh and mineral character with more complexity than that often associated with the local young targets. Unusual preparations are found at Rioja, such as Viero Vendimia Tardía, an artisan sweet target grown in American oak and other references that greatly extend the tasting experience and make it clear that the project isn't limited only to traditional inks.

Wine, as part of the stay.

The difference of Finca from the Arandines lies precisely in not separating all these worlds. The visit to the winery does not propose as an isolated activity but as a natural part of the stay. After passing through and tasting their wines, One can dine **restaurante TierraRelax** in the spa right next to the vineyard and sleep just a few meters from the barrels.

The hotel, restaurant, spa, and wine cellar share a single project and a single way of understanding the landscape. Wine is present throughout the stay, not just as a simple complement, but as the thread that weaves together an experience built around the vineyard and Rioja.

And this significantly alters the way enotourism is practiced. There's no need to rush out of the winery after a tasting or drive back to the hotel. One can stroll among the vineyards, return to the hotel, open a bottle from the estate during dinner, and continue discussing what was seen just a few hours earlier.

But that's the best way to understand Finca de los Arandinos. It does not compete with the grand, monumental wineries of La Rioja or the large capacity hotels. Its appeal lies particularly in the opposition: a small project where vineyards, wine, architecture, and accommodation are united, and where the landscape is not simply something to be spotted from a window or garden. It's the true origin of everything.





Manena's Window

Travel Anecdotes

Text and photos: Manena Munar – manena.munar@gmail.com

"It's those little things..." as Joan Manuel Serrat would sing – these are the things that linger in the memory after a journey, and when we recall them, they bring a smile to our faces, make us cry, or have us laughing out loud. I'd like to dig out a few of them from the treasure chest of my memories and share them with you.

Warsaw: yesterday and today

Scenes from the Polish capital during two periods I was fortunate enough to experience. I look back on the past with nostalgia and observe the present with admiration. Between the two, Warsaw reveals itself as an intriguing city that plays its cards close to its chest.

Palace of Culture and Science at the foot of Varso Tower



These anecdotes I am about to recount are brimming with nostalgia, affection and also admiration for a country I know well. Before I set out to share some of them as best I can, I'd like to say that, speaking for myself, I remember Poland as it was back then as a black-and-white film which, with the passing of the years and the changes in direction, is now being shot in Technicolour. Let me explain: as I walk through Warsaw, every now and then I simply have to stop, in the middle of a square or a street, close my eyes and remember: 'Here, in this very same Defilad Square, where at dusk the kids arrive on their scooters and gather to spend the afternoon, next to the extraordinary Museum of Modern Art, and in the shadow of the Varso Tower—the tallest building in the European Union (it used to be the Palace of Culture and Science, a compulsory gift from the Soviet Union to its satellite states)—there used to be a modest furniture shop. Emilia had her usual queue of people looking for a piece of furniture that, with a bit of luck, would double as a bed, a table and even a bookcase to fulfil three needs in one, within her 323 sq ft flat.



Postcard featuring the Museum of Modern Art, the Palace of Culture and Science, and Varso Tower

Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw



Views of modern Warsaw and Varso Tower from the Palace of Culture and Science





Glass skyscrapers dominate today's Warsaw

I still remember Pani (Mrs) Agnieszka, a remarkable piano teacher who also sang in the philharmonic choir, and whose baby grand piano took up the whole flat. Next to Emilia's shop was a woollen clothing shop, where, incidentally, I wanted to buy a blue jumper, which the shop assistant deemed unsuitable for me, as it didn't match the colour of my eyes or my skin, and as there were only a few left, she wouldn't sell it to me; it would suit someone with blue eyes and fairer skin better... And without even opening my eyes yet, I'm reminded of the other shop next to Emilia's, where they sold beautiful traditional Polish ceramic tableware—white, hand-painted with blue onion patterns. You had to join the queue at least once a month, and so, little by little (po malo po malo), buy a plate, a cup, and wait for the long-awaited day when the pot-bellied soup tureens arrived, to join the queue at dawn and reach the counter before they all ran out. When I opened my eyes, the queues had vanished, giving way to a city growing by leaps and bounds. Glass skyscrapers dominate the skyline of Warsaw, one of the few European cities that still has building plots available. Well-dressed people,

The Palace of Culture and Science dwarfed by the glass-clad buildings of the new Warsaw



museums, fine restaurants, five-star hotels, shops selling the finest brands, ultra-modern cars, colour and design: these are the hallmarks of the new Warsaw.

Warsaw, in a hushed voice.

Wandering aimlessly through the capital of Poland, the city of Frederic Chopin, where his impressive statue stands in Łazienki Park, I find myself in a city that was ravaged by the bombings of the Second World War, almost nothing of which remains, and which now boasts one of the main economic and financial centers of Central Europe. And I stand there, absorbed, gazing at the multitude of glass skyscrapers that have sprung up out of nowhere, like mushrooms in the forest, alongside the famous blocks of flats which, having recently been painted in pastel shades—light blue, pink, yellow - have been taken on a curious vintage, social-style feel, which I find quite amusing. I have to confess that, although Kraków and Gdańsk have always been Poland's most famous cities, I have always had - and still have - a soft spot for Warsaw. Back in the day, you had to get to know it step by step, Carefully uncovering its surprising measures; a club where you could listen to Magnificent jazz, A hidden restaurant that cooks the best Straganoff, flambeed with Cognac, and the cabaret "The Black Cat" at the Hotel Victoria, part of the Sofitel chain, one of the most well-known hotels in modern Warsaw.

Speaking of hotels, I must make special mention of the legendary Hotel Bristol, which was spearheaded by the renowned Polish politician who played a fundamental role in Poland's independence recovery, and one of my favorite composers and pianists, Ignacy Jan Paderewski. While That historic Hotel Europejski, designed by architect Henryk Marconi, opened in 1857 and soon became a hub for writers, artists, politicians, and famous personalities. Today, it is managed by the Raffles chain, and it dazzles with its exquisite interior design within its grandeur, and through its carefully selected art collection. To conclude the hotel section, I had the pleasure of staying at the millennium accommodation, Hotel Puro, in the heart of Warsaw, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.



Sculpture of Ignacy Jan Paderewski in Łazienki Park

The legendary Bristol Hotel



A socialist-era block of flats and the groundbreaking restaurant known as 'The Red Pig'



WARSAW

Dear Vistula

The vital Su River divides Warsaw; on one side stands the Old City, on the other, the Praga district, which once enjoyed a dubious reputation but is now one of the most sought-after spots in the city for young people, who flock to Praga to enjoy its restaurants, bars, and clubs.

I was so taken with Warsaw's latest superb addition, the Magdalena Abakanowicz Footbridge – reserved for pedestrians and cyclists – whose clean, elegant lines enhance the beauty of the Vistula. I crossed it at a leisurely pace, just like the many people walking alongside me. It was a real pleasure to stop every few steps to take in the beautiful views of modern Warsaw, highlighted by Varso Tower and the glass-clad skyscrapers, with the Palace of Culture and Science nestled between them. Meanwhile, from the riverbank, you can admire the picture-postcard view of the captivating Old Town at one end and the Praga district at the other.



Magdalena Abakanowicz Footbridge over the Vistula River

Panoramic view of the Old Town on the banks of the Vistula River from Varso Tower





traveling

gourmets

CULINARY DESTINATIONS

Castellón in 5 stops
must-sees

5 AUTUMN HARVESTS

Worth the trip

RESTAURANTS TESTED: BICHOPALO ■ EL CLAUSTRO



FIVE AUTUMN HARVESTS WORTH A TRIP

Text: Rosario Alonso - Photography: Archive

H autumn mornings that scent the air with freshly pressed must, burning wood, and wet earth. The sun no longer burns as it did in August, and a light mist lingers over the fields as the workers begin a task that, for centuries, has set the rhythm of rural life. It is time for the harvest. The moment when nature, generously, rewards a year's labor.

For generations, the harvest was not just an agricultural necessity. It was also a celebration—a way to give thanks, to gather families and neighbours, to share a meal, songs, and hope before the winter's arrival. Many of these customs still thrive, and instead of fading away, they have found a new significance. Travellers from all corners of the world seek to participate, even for a day, in traditions that preserve the authentic taste of home.

Culinary delights, so closely tied to the land, find their most captivating moments during these weeks.

The harvest, the great autumn ritual

If there is a harvest that encapsulates autumn, it is the grape harvest. No other harvest so vividly brings together landscape, history, culture, and gastronomy.

The gathering of grapes has accompanied Mediterranean civilizations for over two millennia. Phoenicians, Romans, and medieval monasteries shaped a landscape that today forms part of the identity of much of Spain. For centuries, grape harvesting was a grueling task, carried out at dawn to avoid the heat, and involving entire families. Those days often concluded with popular feasts, improvised music, and the shared satisfaction of saving the harvest.

Although mechanization has transformed much of the work, the spirit endures.

Today, the grape harvest has become one of the engines of oenotourism. Every September and October, thousands of people leave the cities to tour vineyards, participate in grape harvesting, visit century-old cellars, and discover how a simple fruit can become one of our cultural gastronomic symbols.

Where the harvest is a festival

In some places, the harvest transcends the agricultural realm and becomes a genuine popular celebration.

In Jerez de la Frontera, the first have to of the year is Symbolically offered as a gesture of gratitude, while Jerez wine reaffirms its place in Andalusian cultural heritage.

In Lojofio, the Festivals of St. John's. Mateo transform the city into a vast celebration of Rioja wine. The traditional processing of jobs recalls the times when wine was born under the foot of the growers.

Requena, in Valencia, hosts one of the country's most popular grape harvest festivals, where parades, tastings, and cultural activities fill the streets for several days.

The Ribera del Duero, El Bierzo, Rias Baixas, Montilla-Moriles, Penedès, or Priorat offer proposals that combine historic heritage, gastronomy, and landscape, showing that each region celebrates the harvest with its own character.



5 AUTUMN HARVESTS

When tradition reinvents itself

New generations of winemakers have understood that visitors no longer seek merely to taste good wine. They want to experience something.

Thus, new proposals have emerged that blend tradition and imagination. Nighttime grape harvests under the moonlight to preserve the freshness of the grapes, morning vineyard breakfasts, concerts in ancient cellars, wine pairings among vines, bike tours, or even yoga sessions in rows of vines before the day begins.

In some cellars, it is still possible to stomp grapes in ancient stone presses, an experience that inevitably brings a smile to those who try it for the first time.

Wine then becomes more than just a drink; it is a story that can be walked, touched, and tasted.

Liquid gold begins at the olive grove the olivar

As the grapes leave the vineyards, the olive groves begin to prepare for another major agricultural campaign.

The early harvest of olives has led to a growing tourism sector: olive oil tourism. Andalusia, particularly Jaén and Córdoba, opens the doors to olive million where visitors discover the process of making extra virgin olive oil, participate in tastings, and understand why this "olive juice" is a cornerstone of Mediterranean cuisine.





Tasting freshly made olive oil on a simple slice of bread remains one of those experiences that can encapsulate an entire region.

The forest also has its harvest

Not all mushroom forays begin in cultivated fields. With the first rains, mushroom hunters appear. Armed with baskets and knives, they traverse pine forests and oak groves, following a knowledge passed down from generation to generation.

In Soria, Navarra, Burgos, La Rioja, or the Pyrenees, mushroom forays have become a tourist attraction that brings together experts, chefs, and incorporates around one of autumn's great gastronomic Treasures.

Boletus, chanterelles, trumpet mushrooms, or rebozuelos inspire menus that change with each season, reminding us that cooking also depends on the whims of the forest.

The scent of roasting chestnuts

There are few scents as recognizable as that of roasting chestnuts over a brazier.

In Galicia, Asturias, León, or Catalonia, old macodes and castañadas still get neighbours and visitors around the fire.





These simple celebrations feature chestnuts, new wine, traditional sweet, and popular music. In an era dominated by speed, these festivals preserve the pleasure of unhurried conversation as autumn advances.

The delicate miracle of saffron

It lasts only a few days, but it is enough to completely transform the landscape of Manchego.

At dawn, thousands of violet flowers cover the fields, marking the beginning of a harvest that barely allows for delay. The patient work of separating the delicate red stigmas, one by one, will eventually transform them into one of the world's most treasured spices.

Who witnesses this labor immediately understands why saffron is still known as the red gold.

Apples, pomegranates, and other autumn flavors of the season

The harvest calendar continues with the apples destined for cider in Asturias and the Basque Country; the quinces





that fill kitchens with family recipes; the pomegranates that signal the first frosts; and the pumpkins that find their place in both traditional and creative cooking.

These are products less in the spotlight than grapes, but no less tied to a season that invites slow cooking.

Travel to understand the origin

Perhaps the growing success of these festivals has a simple explanation.

We live surrounded by food whose origins we barely know. Participating in a harvest, picking olives, walking among chestnut trees, or witnessing the saffron bloom reminds us that behind every glass of wine, every bottle of olive oil, or every seasonal dish lies a landscape, a craft, and many hands.

Autumn harvests are, in reality, a celebration of patience. Of the rhythms set by nature against the hurry of our time.

Perhaps that's why those who return from a harvest talk not just about the wine. They talk about the silence of the vineyards at dawn, the conversations shared between vines, the scent of must, the impossible color of the forests, and the rare feeling of being part of something that existed long before us.

And that, probably, is the best harvest a traveler can carry away.





The taste of Castellón in five essential stops

Text and photography: Yolanda Cardo - yolandacardo66@gmail.com

A delicious journey celebrates the work of local producers as a hallmark of Castellón's rich gastronomy

Peg's lung. From sea to casserole

No route of flavour by Castellón would be complete without witness the fish auction, in this case at Peñíscola's Ranch. And the province of Castelló does one of the most varied and honest challenges of the Mediterranean. Between the Sierra de Espadan and the coast that baits Peníscola, Benicàssim or Vinaròs, this land has for generations established an extraordinary gastronomic landscape where products from the sea and from the garden invite to discover the province "tasting every corner." Castelló Rocha de Sabor was born with that vocation: To know closely and to taste the excellence of his products. It's not a restricted itinerary, but rather a suggestive proposal to delve into the province through its most authen-

tic flavors: extra virgin olive oils pressed with patience, wines that mature in rhythm with the seasons, artisanal creations, and fresh fish and seafood that are auctioned off daily right by the sea.

Through guided tours, catas and sensible experiences, Castelló Rocha de Sabor propose to slow down and get to know the faces behind every product that arrives at the table. Because as a traveller knows who they cultivate, manufacture or fish, they stop being mere food to become an inescapable story. A stimulating that invites you to explore this wonderful land in a different way. We propose some of the essential stops in the coastal comarcas of the Baix Maestrat and the Upper Maestrat Plain.

Almazara Bardomus. Landscape oils

There are places where geography appears to have been prepared to produce something really outstanding. Between Alcala de Xivern and Torreblanca, the heart of the Spanish interior, this happens. The exclusive range of premium oils from Almazara Bardomus are born here. Seventy hectares of olive grove in an environment guarded by mountains with the sea as a backdrop. With the natural parks of the Serra d'Irta and the Prat de Cabanes as silent guardians, this olive farm benefits from three decisive factors: the constant breeze of the sea, cold winters and an outstanding microclimate. The result are an AOVes with unique organoleptic personality. Fernando Agramunt, manager of the farm, tells that the olive is grown at its best, between the second and third week of October, while still conserving that intense green and travelling without pause to the mill. That simple gesture allows us to catch in the bottle all the flavors and freshness of the fruits, almost, newly collected.

A catalogue was born from this discipline and nourished from the diversity of the Valencian olive grove. Variages such as frying, fruit and elegant, quartiere with character and spicy, arbequina, farga or picual enrich the house's flavors. The best, for Fernando, "whoever you like."



Winery Mas de Rander. Wines from Castellón

At this wine of Benlloch the landscape is everything. The vineyards, centuries old olive trees - some with more than eight centuries old - are a project where agriculture and enoturism are an integral part of the same experience. Juan Domingo Tárrega is the mater soul of this spectacular family farm that was born 25 years ago with a vocation to make outstanding wines. "That's the worse business I've been doing with my head and best with his heart," she says about this bioclimatic wind, perfectly integrated into the environment, with partially burned architecture and vegetable cover to maintain a stable temperature. The enoturistic experience allows us to walk through the extensive planting of citrus and vineyards where different such as merlot, sauvignon blanc, syrah or monastrell are growing and they finish their wines with the minimum intervention. According to Juan Domingo, "wants that tell a story," that of the territory and the people who inhabit it.





Badúm Ceders. From Peñíscola

Artisan and ecologically friendly ciders also feature on this route, introduced by the Founders, brothers Alex and Hernan, of Beer Badúm, the cider from Peñíscola. They say the idea was born "on a Silly Saturday afternoon in the kitchen." During our visit, we found how a thorough breaking process, where the variety of jobs and malts make the difference, culminates in a range of gangs "inspired by their land and people." For instance, the Badum Artichoke, a tast made with artichokes from Benicarló, the Lola, a lager with a rich body thanks to its four types of malt and three hop varieties, the lpa with citrus aromas, or the Eco Pumpkin Ale, a seasonal tast matulated with pumpkins.



964 Tasting Shop. Productos de territorio

In the town of Alcossebre we have found a small trade that has become a reference point for loves of good local product. Raquel Cabrero, a professional sumiller, is the architect of this welcoming space that brings together a selection of products from the best manufacturers of the province. In 964 Tasting Shop (Carrer del Barquer, 8. Alcossebre, Castelló) you can buy a exquisite range of products from the area but you can also enjoy thematic cas, pairings and tasting that allow you to discover the gastronomic diversity of Castellón. premium oils, wines, vermouths, liquors, cheeses, honey, sausages or condors look at their shelters as a delicious window of the territory, and as soon as the boat's show arrives at port to download the capture of the day while we look at the diversity of the Mediterranean it's best way to connect with the sea culture. More as soon as we can enjoy it at the plate, around a good table with a fideuba, a seafood paella, a panda rice, fish pits or some of its traditional rossejats.



Marta Alonso, Daniel, and Guillermo Pozuelo

bichopalo

Text: José Antonio Muñoz

Photography: Bicropalo and Jose A. Muñoz



EIn a part of Madrid where the gastronomic offers seem to multiply with each season, Bicropalo was born in 2019 in a small start at the Barceló Market. Even this humble beginning explain much of what it remains today. There, among supplies, fresh production, and the daily rhhm of a market, brothers Daniel and Guillermo Pozuelo began translating a project that would later relocate to Chamberí, on Cristóbal Bordiú Street, very close to pon-zano. While the setting changed, the philosophy remained largely the same: local cuisine, quality ingredients, freedom, and a certain resistance to doing things the conventional way. The restaurant is small, with just about twenty seats and an open kitchen that captures most of the attention from the moment you enter. There are no grand decorations or a complicated mise en scène. The experience revolves around the dish and that close proximity between kitchen and dining area that allows you to follow part of the team's work. In Bichopalo, cooking is on view and, in a sense, better understood what comes to the table.

Daniel Pozuelo, a Madrid-born lad brought up in Collado Villalba, is at the helm. His relationship with cooking began early, watching his grandmother for hours, although he ended up studying hospitality almost by chance. Years of training



View of the dining room. Bottom photo, a selection of your tasting menu dishes



followed, alongside some significant kitchens: Paco Roncero, Alboroque, Arzak, and DStage. A professional journey that would need to be completed with another, less academic but probably equally influential, school: travel.

Mexico, Panama, Morocco, Japan, Korea, China, Peru or India appear, one way or another, in their gastronomic memory. From these trips come techniques, spices, ferments, sauces and combinations that are later found with products and production with a Mediterranean root. The house itself defines its cuisine as "from here and there," a simple formula that in this case is quite precise. Asian technologies co-exist with classical backgrounds, fish, meat, seasonal vegetables or memories of traditional plates.

This doesn't mean that Bichopalo is an Asian restaurant or that it intends to practice fusion cooking in the usual sense. Daniel Pozuelo seems to be working with more freedom. He can use miso, kimchi, ponzu, gochujang, or any spice from his travels, but the end result aims to keep the product recognizable. There's skill involved and an intention to surprise, while avoiding turning every dish into a showcase.

The menu doesn't stay too quiet either. The season, the market, and what arrives from its suppliers are all bringing about changes.

And that close relationship with the positions and small merchants remains exactly the same, allowing for adjustments and product introductions according to the moment. Over these years, various dishes have graced their tables: oysters with ponzu, hake with chewed and miso, quail with Asian inspiration sauces, broken egg versions or that Korean charcoal made with tteokbokki that became one of its most commented plates. Many are missing soon after. The idea of "classical plate" here has a quite short life.

Currently the proposal revolves around two tasting menus: a short six-course one and a longer eleven-course one, to which additional dishes outside the menu can be added depending on the market and the season. There is, therefore, no conventional menu that allows for exact anticipation of what will be served. Part of the appeal lies precisely in sitting back and letting the kitchen guide the journey.

In the room is Guillermo Pozuelo, brother of Daniel and part of the project from his first day at Barceló. It also deals with the liquid proposal, designed with the same intention to get away from the foreseeable. The selection looks for small producers, less usual references and wines capable of accompanying a often changing kitchen.

The real work. He's been finding recognition. Bicipalo received Michelin's Bib Gourmet in 2023, 2024 and 2025 and remains recommended by the guide in 2026. It has been among the establishments recommended by Guía Repsol.

But perhaps the most interesting thing's out of distinction. Bicipalo has been able to maintain something that isn't always simple as a restaurant with high visibility: the feeling of being with a personal, small, less and still ready to change cuisine. A restaurant where you can travel quite without leaving Chamberí.



bicipalo





Cuisine with Granadan Roots

Text: Rosario Alonso - Photograph: The Cloister Restaurant

El Claustro

EIn the heart of Granada's historic centre, benefits the architecture of a centuries-old convention, The Claultro occupies one of those spaces where architecture and cuisine seem to understand each other without the need to compete. The restaurant is part of the Hotel Palacio de Santa Paula, but it has enough personality to stand as a gastronomic destination in its own right: here, the true argument is at the table.

The kitchen is firmly looking towards Granada. Not just at its most recognizable recipes, but at a province that allows you to travel from Sierra Nevada to the Tropical Coast in just a few kilometers, crossing valleys, mountains, and different regions with products of varying kinds. That diversity forms the basis of a proposal that also recovers Andalusian gastronomic heritage of Granada's cuisine and brings it into a contemporary, technical yet easily recognizable cooking style.

The Repsol Guide keeps El Clatitro among its restaurants recommended in 2026, with an outstanding feature of that cuisine linked to the area. He currently points to Luismi Luque as head of cuisine, accompanied by Marco Cantini in his living room and his supurities. A particularly interesting reference because it confirms the continuity of a restaurant that has been occupying an outstanding place in granadine restoration for years.

His relationship with haute cuisine goes back a long time. During Rafael Arroyo's tenure, he was already deeply involved. He was at the forefront of his fires, and El Claustro participated in meetings with cooks recognised by Michelin. The Arroyo itself had passed through establishments with Michelin stars, contributing to strengthening the gastronomic vocation of the house.

A letter that changes with Granada

To fall, perhaps temporality will be one of the most interesting aspects of The Claustro. The restaurant keeps a letter that evolves throughout the year and incorporates products that come from the Vega, the Sierra and the coast. The house's own philosophy relies on the product of proximity and respect for every station, so that the granadine pantry marks a good share of the rhythm of the kitchen.

The change of season fits particularly well with the restaurant's character. As temperatures start to drop, Granada invites a more relaxed table, more deeply flavored dishes, and elaborations that recall the traditional repertoire. The Claustro finds a natural ground to work with stews, casseroles, meats, seasonal vegetables, and Sierra products, without losing that contemporary perspective that defines its cuisine. It's not about dressing up ancient recipes with modernity, but about understanding them and giving them a fresh reading.

Fresh cod confit



Breakfast, including avocado Benedict





Generalife Gardens

the Clausto Bar", an essential stop

Among the products that have been recently defined, we can find as suggestive plates as: the tidal tidal of bluefin tuna Balfegó with gazpacho of Oranges of the Valle, the tips "bottled" with peppermint and Montefriño cheese, the cod confided with mantle of gurullos, the lubine with gazpachelo of chelas or the carrot of frosted after Lamb. Dates that best understand the approach: recognizable product, local references and contemporary performance.

It is also interesting to note the presence of ingredients from different parts of the province. Granada's huerta, the products from the Costa Tropical, and the raw materials from the Sierra build a menu that doesn't need to look far to find its identity. Granada has a sufficiently varied larder to contribute different flavors with each season, and The Clausto capitalizes on that diversity to keep its proposition alive.

The offer is rounded off with a tasting menu, an executive menu, and group formulas, providing various ways to approach a kitchen that aims to cater to both the visitor and the local community.

When autumn arrives in Granada and the city regains a more relaxed pace, The Clausto will likely have its strongest argument in what it has been defending for years: telling Granada through its products, recipes, and culinary heritage, allowing each season to contribute a different part of its story.

**Rest. The Closing
Hotel Palacio
de Sta. Paula
(Granada)**



