

Cortegada archipelago



As on Sálvora, Cortegada does not have a regular public transport service, meaning that a private boat or a ferry service are needed, both with the required authorizations. There is only one enabled for Public Use on the isle of Cortegada, which has a smaller option for visitors with not enough time or wanting to be involved in other activities, such as watching wildlife, flora or simply unwinding and enjoying the scenery.

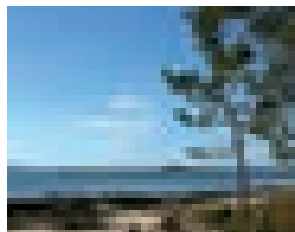
A prospectus supplemented with some clearly marked posts will help us to go on this walk to discover some of the isle's treasures. These brochures can be requested from the wardens, the arranged ferry service or can be found at the information points in the National Park.

■ 1. Circular route on the isle of Cortegada.

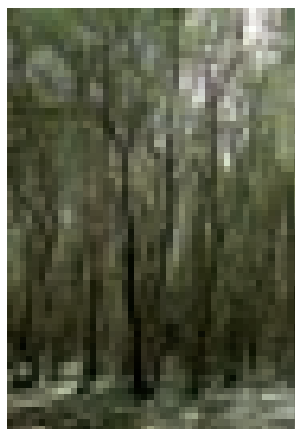
■ Option A

- Distance: 3.2km
- Duration of the route: 1 hour 15 minutes.
- Maximum elevation: 3m.
- Signposting colour: Green.
- Main points of interest: Cortegada chapel, isles of Malveira, Malveira Grande and Malveira Chica, laurel wood, oak wood, Cruceiro, old settlement.
- Description of the route: the route starts from the same beach where we get off the boat. From here, we will see some of the most emblematic buildings of the few left standing on Cortegada: the chapel, next to which there used to be a small hospital, and one of the three stone crosses still standing on the archipelago, signalling the sea route to Santiago de Compostela. To follow the route in a clockwise direction, we take the path heading westward, shortly before reaching the chapel and we will keep on this path, since it runs the length of the island parallel to the shore, letting us admire Cortegada's natural wealth without passing through some particularly sensitive areas such as laurel forests. The first part of the path follows the west side of the island, affording a view of the other islands that make up the archipelago: Malveira Grande and its unique Pyrenean oak forest, Malveira Chica, O Con and Briñas, all classed as reserve areas.

After leaving behind a couple of large pine trees, we begin to see some of the representative tree species on the isle: the difference between Galician oak and Pyrenean oak is evident when comparing several specimen that give the path shade; willows, some with a large diameter and finally, laurels, spectacular in their age, height and density, which makes this the most important laurel grove in the peninsula. A well-preserved oak grove in the northwestern part of the island adds the finishing touch to the isle's wealth.



Malveiras from the west coast of Cortegada

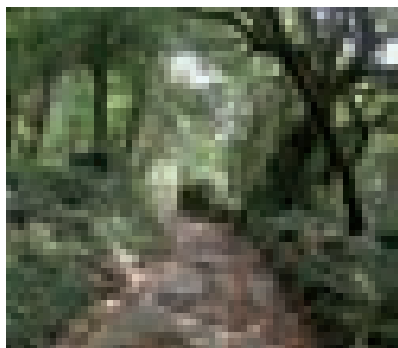
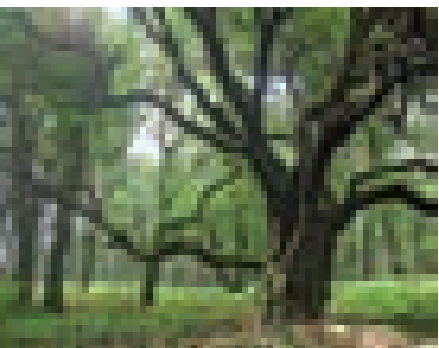


Laurel grove on Cortegada

Shortly after Batel beach, autochthonous vegetation begins to lose ground due to the proliferation of eucalyptus and pine trees, which are currently under a plan for the eradication of non-native species. The Punta Corveiro stone cross, at the northeastern end of the isle, marks the beginning of the shellfish harvesting area, as shown by the shellfish farms and the thousands of shells built up on the first houses in Carril, we walk past the point of the closest isle to the mainland. Here, following “O camiño do carro” (the cart track), time was when hundreds of kilos of seaweed, a superb fertilizer for the fields, used to be transported. Even today, the locals who have enough experience and knowledge of the land, and when the tides permit, walk across at this point to get to the island. After leaving behind a small beach and a very important alder grove on our right, we gradually draw closer to the ruins of Cortegada village, abandoned after the expropriations executed when the island was donated to Alfonso XIII.

Today only a few walls are left standing, among which grow huge laurels, giving it a mysterious, magical air to the place. Before finishing our tour, now back on the beach, we will walk close to the restored caretakers’ quarters, who used to look after the king’s property for years, becoming the last inhabitants of the island.

A spectacular hawthorn shows the good condition and variety of trees and vegetation on Cortegada

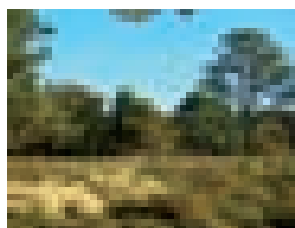


Arrival at the village following the “Camiño do Carro”

■ Option B

- Distance: 2.1Km
- Travelling time: 45 minutes.
- Maximum elevation: 3 m.
- Main attractions: Cortegada chapel, isles of Malveira Grande, Malveira Chica, laurel wood, oak wood, interior forest, old settlement.
- Description of the route: the route is the same as the previous, until reaching the eucalyptus grove located after Batel beach, in the northern part of the island. There, a post will indicate the possibility of taking a short cut following a path across the island and, for a few minutes, we find ourselves in a magical forest of oak, chestnut, ancient pines and laurels, a valuable habitat for species such as the spectacular stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), protected at European level.

We leave the perimeter path opposite Sartaxens beach and continue west, with the sea on your left, until we reach the old settlement first and then the information booth and here our tour comes to a close.



The prairie, a surprise on Cortegada



The old village taken over by vegetation

The quiet beach of Sartaxens, opposite the town of Carril.

