

Ons archipelago



The routes described below are located on the isle of Ons, since the entire surface area of Onza, with the exception of its beaches, is listed as a reserve area. As in the case of Cíes, all routes start from the information point next to the pier, where the park staff will provide any additional information about the courses or other aspects of interest. The existing paths have led to organizing circular tours, which will allow visitors to appreciate more fully the natural and cultural values of Ons, without increasing the length of the routes too much. It is important to pay attention to the existing signposting as well as to any possible indications from the park staff because, since the island is inhabited, Ons has a lot of paths, so that it is easy to get lost, stray into forbidden areas and/or delay our return to the port.

■ 1.- Southbound route

- Distance: 6.2 Km
- Duration of the route: 2 hours 30 minutes (circular route).
- Maximum Elevation: 86m.
- Signposting colour: Green.
- Main points of interest: Curro settlement, Area dos Cans and Canexol beaches, Fedorentos viewpoint, Buraco do Inferno (Hell's Hole), Caniveliñas Cove.

*Area dos Cans,
with the islet where the
"Laxe do Crego" lies*

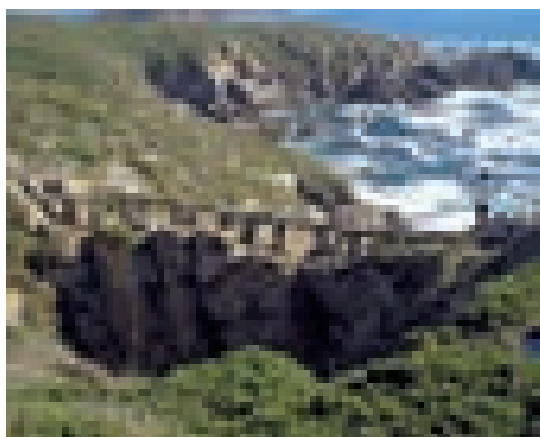


- Description of the route: after leaving the National Park information booth behind, we climb up the short but steep slope that crosses the small Curro settlement, to the crossing where all the main paths and paths meet, a few meters from the church. We take the cement path ruts bearing south which, on the initial stretch, runs parallel with the beaches. Just after the first beach, Area dos Cans, it is interesting to look at the series of rocks about 80m from the coast, where "Laxe do Crego" (the Priest's slab) lies, an anthropomorphic sarcophagus dating from the Middle Ages that has since been the subject of numerous legends.

Shortly after, we reach Canexol beach and its fragile dune system, currently being recovered. On the other side of the path, we find the old rectory with its traditional granaries, and then, in the middle of the hillside, the cemetery and the old church are still preserved. The living quarters that come across along the way, some of them inhabited, are part of the districts known as Canexol and Pereiró, which we come to after a pleasant 20 minute walk. Here we find the facilities used as summer camps that the Regional Government of Galicia has been organizing in Ons for years. The path continues uphill, veering to the left, with a slim solitary reference in the thick pine tree among the thick scrub vegetation which, in about 45 minutes from the start of the route, will lead

*Mirador de Fedorentos,
a balcony over the ocean*





*Buraco do Inferno,
a gateway to hell,
according to the legends.*

onto the beautiful Fedorentos viewpoint, where we can enjoy splendid views of the round isle of Onza in the foreground and dramatic profile of Cíes behind.

Backstepping a little, we continue westward to approach the Buraco do Inferno (Hell's Hole) (1h 30 m), gorged out by the churning power of the ocean, an odd geological formation that links with the sea about 40m deep.

The main path will take us along the western coast up to Caniveliñas Cove, after a steep descent. Here, after saying goodbye to the ocean, we will start the way back along the path that leads out on our right. Shortly after, we turn off onto a path to the left, which in turn will lead, after passing through a tunnel of willows and blackthorn, into the path coming down from the Lighthouse and which, within minutes, will take us to Curro.



*Melide beach,
a walk that is worth it*

■ 2.- Northern Route

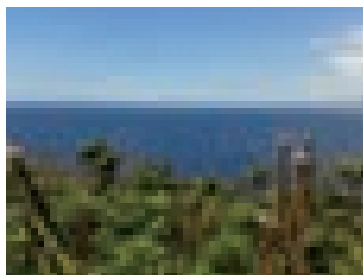
- Distance: 8.1km
- Duration of the route: 3 hours (circular route).
- Maximum Elevation: 100m.
- Signposting colour: Blue.
- Main points of interest: Curro settlement, Melide beach, Punta Centolo, Punta Xubenco, Ons lighthouse, Punta Liñeiros, Caniveliñas Cove.
- Description of the route: as on the previous route, starting from the information booth next to the pier. We walk through the Curro settlement where the catering services, staff quarters and the Park Visitor Centre are found, until we come to the crossing. We then take the northbound path, towards Melide beach, the longest and most beautiful stretch of sand on the isle of Ons.

Shortly after, the scrub vegetation, predominant in this area, allows us to enjoy the views over Punta Centolo beach to the north, the vast sandy bar of A Lanzada beach, and almost the entire profile of the Rias Baixas, which we can follow if we look to the east. Now close to Melide, eucalyptus trees, now in a project to eradicate non-native species, shade the path which, until then, ran between the thick gorse bushes dotted with some pines, laurel and oak saplings. Years ago, this was a cosy place chosen by many visitors to spend long periods on the island, a period from which only the nudist beach has remained as a tradition, which we will get to after a half hour's walk. If the beauty and clarity of the waters of Melide have not finished off our desire to walk, we take the path that starts to climb northwards. At the first crossing, it is worth while turning off for 15 minu-

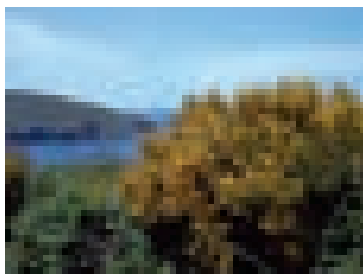
tes to reach Punta Centolo viewpoint, a spectacular balcony that allows us to enjoy one of the most beautiful, overall views of the coast: Sálvora, with the coast of Sierra Ribeira and the irregular Sierra de Barbanza behind, O Grove peninsula, A Lanzada, the Ria of Pontevedra, Aldan, Costa da Vela ... The importance of this place, apart from its landscape, is that this is one of the breeding areas for the yellow-legged gull and shag, the two most representative species of seabirds in the National Park; therefore, access is restricted from 15th February to 31st July, which is the nesting period. Back at the crossing, we now continue walking uphill, westward, where the path will continue twisting and turning along the west side between gorse, heather and broom, the vast Atlantic ocean providing a scenic background.

The altitude indicates that we are close to the Lighthouse, which we can approach if we take a few minutes' diversion to the helipad (the best spot for admiring this imposing building) at the crossing with the route by which we came, the path that leads out from the lighthouse and the path that leads to Punta Liñeiros. Then we continue, now along a gentle descent to the south, enjoying the sea breeze and the profile of Caniveliñas Cove. On this stretch of path, we can observe hardy specimens of *Cytisus insularis*, a kind of broom so far only described on the isles of Ons and Sálvora.

After enjoying this landscape, we can only return to the starting point, so we take the first path to the left at the lower part of the bay, which eventually leads into the paved path that we will take down to Curro.



The path gives us a view of Sálvora, besides the blue ocean.



Xesta de Ons, painting the path to Caniveliñas with colour.



Island house, an example of the ethnographic richness of Ons.



Following the guide's explanations, next to the imposing Ons lighthouse.

■ 3.- Lighthouse Route

- Distance: 4Km
- Duration of the route: 1 hour 30 minutes (circular route).
- Maximum Elevation: 120m.
- Signposting colour: Yellow.
- Main points of interest: Curro settlement, Ons lighthouse, Caniveliñas Cove.
- Description of the route: as on previous routes, we start from the information booth. This steep slope brings us into Curro, the main populated centre of the island and home to most of the services. The first building that we have on the right, today the forestry house, was for years a hive of activity on island, since in it the salting factory that modified fishing activities was set up there, leading to a period of economic prosperity and substantial growth in the resident population. Later, after the closure of the factory, the Riobó family settled there, which owns the island and owns a commercial company devoted to drying octopus and conger. Before we leave the settlement, we keep the unitary schools to our left where, for just under a decade, Ons boys and girls used to go, although in separate classes. This building now houses the visitor centre and offices. Leaving the paved path, we follow the path as it starts to climb gently to the southwest, and here we find some of the housing that exemplifies the local architecture: rectangular floor, ground floor, doors and windows facing east, outhouse, barn and an adjoining room to keep the dorna rowing boat dry, as well as the peculiar way of painting the house fronts.

Before taking the next bend, the splendid views of the estuary provide a good reason for a small stop on the way, among what used to be farmland dominated by potatoes, corn and rye, on the sheltered slopes on the east side of the island. Soon after, several willows and black-thorn will make their appearance, as an example of native vegetation that is still to be found on the island. After which, some scattered houses warn us that we are coming into the Cucorno district. In the background, the vast hexagonal lighthouse tower of the Ons lighthouse looms up. Today, it is not possible, unless authorized, to enter the lighthouse grounds, so we turn down a path to the right of the entrance bordering the enclosure. In a few minutes, we can take a brief detour to the heliport, where the magnificent building of the lighthouse, located at the highest point of the island, is best seen. Along with Sálvora, this is one of the few still remaining in Spain that is attended by lighthouse keepers. Uninterruptedly since 1926, the year in which it first began to work with oil and now with solar panels, its powerful beam serves as a guide for the numerous sea routes in the Rias Baixas.

We follow the path that leads to the west that runs along the coast. We head south (left), following the path down through the dense thicket of gorse, heather and brushwood, they start to lose ground against the harsh conditions imposed by the ocean. Caniveliñas Cove, which gradually fills our field of vision, is a deeper recess defining the narrowest part of the island, just 350m wide. Continue along the path to the lower area of the cove, where the source of the same name is located. After taking a break after an hour of travel, we will Curro through the path from here heads east, towards the river. At the next junction, between the walls that lined old farms, we head to the left. In 5 minutes you reach the paved path, which will return to the village.



The pier and Curro district, from the path leading up to the lighthouse.

■ 4.- Castelo Route

- Distance: 1.1Km
- Duration of the route: 40 minutes (circular route).
- Maximum Elevation: 33m.
- Signposting colour: Red.
- Main points of interest: Castelo viewpoint, Castelo Fountain, Curro settlement.
- Description of the route: opposite the information booth, where the route begins, is the Praia das Dornas, the first landmark on the route. The small sandy beach is named after the ancient boats used by the islanders and are a legacy of the early 10th century Norman ships that invaded our shores, adapted to meet the conditions and type of fishing in the area. Virtually obsolete, only a few lie in this natural harbour, where before it was common to see dozens lined up along the shore.



North view from the ruins of the "Castelo".

Going up the steps next to the fountain, there is a small rest area with tables and benches, which we will cross to take the path heading north, parallel to the coastline. The rocky bottoms, prevalent in the archipelago, are clearly visible along this stretch, especially if our walk coincides with low tide. We cross a small valley where willows indicate the presence of fresh water, more abundant here than in nearby Cíes. As we come to a small clearing a little further along, looking to the left, we will see the Ons lighthouse lantern. The path, which now runs through a corridor of thorn, blackthorn thickets, gorse and bracken, in the space of about 15 minutes will take us from the information office to the Castelo viewpoint. Only ruins of the walls remain of what was once an ancient defensive fortification raised in this strategic location. Here we can enjoy the view across the east coast of the isle of Ons and the Ria of Pontevedra.



"Elvira", at rest alone on the beach.

In the foreground to the North, we see Melide beach, the most beautiful and emblematic stretch of sand on the archipelago. To the south, the pier, Curro, Canexol Beach, Onza and, in the distance, almost always enveloped in mist, the isles of Cíes. Backstepping to the previous clearing, we follow the path into the interior part of the island. Walls erected at the foot of the now slightly uphill path, mark the boundaries of old farms and fields. Before coming out onto one of the main paths, we pass by a small willow grove hanging over Castelo fountain (25 minutes from the start of the route). To return to the village, we only have to follow the main path heading south. On the sides, we can see some examples of traditional architecture and several stone granaries or a washing place in fairly good condition, next to the village.