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### III. Park history and cultural heritage



## History and culture of the islands

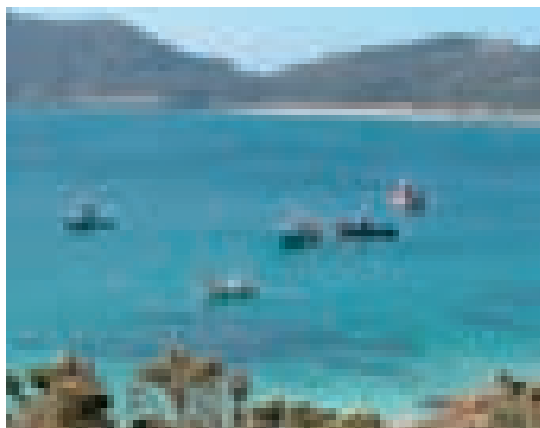
*"The islands, haughty and watchful like faithful dogs, guard the pristine gateways to the Rías so that they may rest easy and dream, while the rivers regale the Ocean with the most benign poetry from inland" Castroviejo.*



*Located at the entrance to the rías, the islands curb the rough waters flowing in from the ocean*

These Atlantic islands were used as a hideaway by nearby peoples and enemy vessels, as a way of life for settlers and a paradise for tourists. They have all left their share of legends, superstitions and stories, which led explorers and the curious to set out on risky adventures.

Throughout history they have all experienced similar situations due to their relative proximity and given the closeness of the coast. Occupied by different monastic orders in the Middle Ages, by the beginning of the second millennium they were the property of the Church and were awarded to nobles of the time. Invaders attacked and used them as a base for incursions along the coast; they witnessed the development of the salting companies and now share their beauty with visitors.



*Fishing activity in the islands waters*

All are united by their condition of being islands, surrounded by waters rich in fish and shellfish, which make up an important part of the settlers' diets and turned them into expert sailors. Besides learning to cultivate the land and using plants to cure, the inhabitants created an entire store of unique popular knowhow, now threatened with extinction.

However, each one of the islands, for its situation and particular features, has its own history, giving rise to different heritage and cultural values. Given that the nearby coast was the setting for many historical events, a frame of reference is provided (see following page).

Protection of the islands' natural values got underway in 1980 when the Cíes Archipelago was declared a natural park. Later studies led to its being named an SPA (Special Protection Area for Birds) in 1988, as was the Ons Archipelago in 2001. The joint vision of several coastal areas and islands in this part of the Atlantic led in 2002 to the creation of the Atlantic Islands of Galicia National Maritime-Terrestrial Park (Act 15/2002 of 1 July), which covers the archipelagos of Cíes, Ons, Sálvora and Cortegada.

# Chronology historical



# HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

## 1800s-1850s

1800s-1850s  
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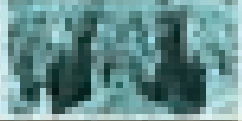
## 1850s-1900s

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## 1900s-1950s

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## Cíes

*"This brigantine sank, swallowed up by the sea on a stormy night a long time ago. It was carrying a cargo of onzas and doubloons, part of which ended up on the sandy bed of the cave right below "Punta do Cabalo", which since then has been known as "Cova dos pesos".*

*Castroviejo 1955*



### HISTORY

Although both Palaeolithic and Neolithic man traversed Cíes Islands, the earliest settlements are from the **Bronze Age**. The **"As Hortas" settlement** on the slopes of Mount Faro dates from that period as do other as yet unconfirmed references to similar structures in Alto da Campá.

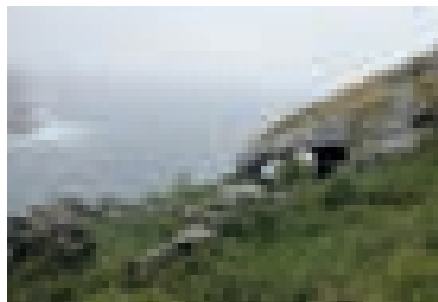
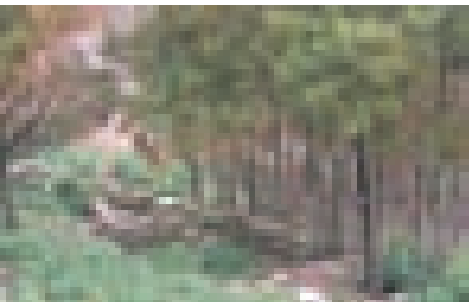
From the remains found there, that settlement has been classed as *castro*-Roman. It is linked with a series of natural shelters such as the one known as the "Druid altar". Resembling a skull, the grooves on the surface led many to take it as proof that sacrifices were made to the gods there. The "concheiros" (deposits consisting of shell and bone remains and pottery shards, etc.) found there indicate that their diet included shellfish and fish from ne-

arby waters. They are thought to have traded with people along the coast given the findings of pottery with motifs similar to those on the Peninsula.

Although there has been speculation that these islands were part of the *Kassiterides* Islands (named by the Greeks), the implicit allusion in the place name to Casiterita - tin- and the absence of this metal in the interior of the islands, leads to the conclusion that the islands may have been a tin trading site.

The **Romans** who sailed the *Mare Tenebrosum* called them the *Islands of the Gods*, and made them the scenario for the legend of Julius Caesar and the indomitable Herminians – a Celtic people from northern Portugal who tried to escape Roman harassment by seeking refuge on the islands. Roman remains similar to those of “As Hortas” found on the southern island (Isla Sur) suggest a settlement or outpost for merchant shipping, an idea as yet unconfirmed.

No remains or documents of possible inhabitants from Roman times to the appearance of the first hermits on



the islands have been discovered. This dark period of the island falls within the context of the rise of Norman and Sueve invasions on these shores, which lasted until the eleventh century. The Roman legacy of the Christianisation throughout Galician territory that converted the fierce Sueves was what triggered the proliferation of religious orders during the **Middle Ages**.

*Town of “As Hortas”, old fort, and “Druidic altar”, shelter and vantage point in the Bronze Age.*



*Bird's eye view of the Cíes islands*

The **islands** were **donated** to the **Cathedral of Santiago** by the King Alfonso III in 899. Two **convent-hermitages** were built in the Cíes during this period (eleventh to twelfth century): on the Middle Island (San Esteban) and the South Island (San Martín), and the monks who settled there controlled and managed the small population that congregated.

However, the discovery of the tomb of the Apostle St. James (Santiago) stoked Norman greed, and one of them, the Great Olaff, who was nicknamed "The Galician", attacked the islands and destroyed the convents.

The donation of the islands to the Church was confirmed by successive kings of Galicia when the convents, or what remained of them, were assigned to the order of the Benedictines in 1152 and the Franciscans in 1377. These new religious communities maintained a **feudal regime** over the population that remained until the mid-sixteenth century. They grew rye, millet and wheat, and kept relatively free ranging animals – goats, sheep, chickens, rabbits and pigs – on the abundant pasture land. Their staple diet was rounded off with fish. The land was fertilised with algae and there was plenty of water.

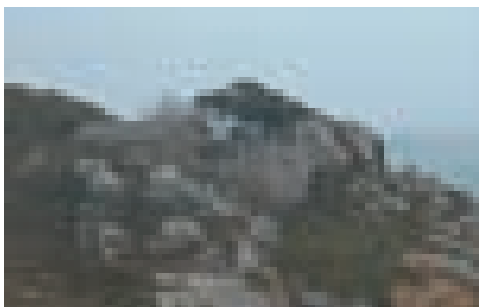
In the late Middle Ages a series of conflicts involving the Spanish monarchy arose in response to the change in the international panorama overseas. It led to the islands being used as a haven for foreign vessels. These **new invasions** (Turks, Tunisians, English) did not, in the main, affect the islanders, except in the case of the pirate Francis Drake, who laid waste to the Ría de Vigo and the Cíes Islands. The Battle of Rande against the Anglo-Dutch squadron in 1702 is famous. The victory left in its wake legends about treasures hidden in sunken Spanish ships.

The ecclesiastical presence waned partly due to internal conflicts within the Church, but mostly because of further pirate attacks until well into the eighteenth century, i.e. the **Modern Era**.



At that time – the mid-16th to 18th centuries – the harassed island population lived much as they had done under the former monastic regime, in which the forum of what was then the Sías Islands was administered by nobles from the town of Baiona and came to be known as the **Bayonne Islands** or Islands of Bayonne in the 18th century. Lack of security to the islands being abandoned.

As a result of all the maritime chaos, pirates and trading routes, the Sías Cíes were the subject of several fortification plans, resulting in an artillery store in 1810 in the former Monastery of San Esteban, and, later, a **barracks for carabineers and a jail** near Nuestra Señora Beach.



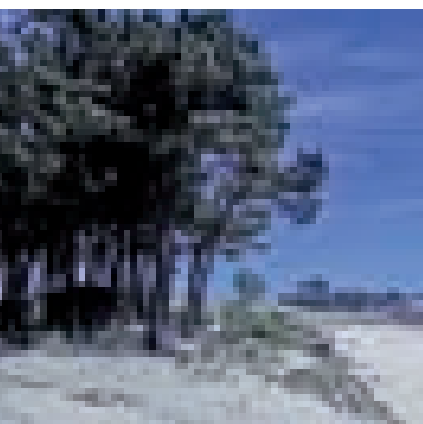
*Former jail*



*Carabineer barracks*

At the beginning of the 19th century, those defensive constructions contributed to a greater feeling of confidence, which encouraged resettlement and fresh activity. The islands came to depend on the town of Vigo in 1840 and around that time two **salting factories** were set up, one on the northern island, where the Restaurante de Rodas is currently located, and the other on the southern island, with a warehouse and a wharf. A tavern known as “La Isleña”, near El Lago, also thrived, serving many sailors. Cíes lighthouse was built in 1852.

Competition from the canning industry on the nearby coast caused the decline of the salting facilities and led to their being demoted to warehouses in 1900. El Lago is said to have been used at that time as a nursery for rearing lobsters. Las Cíes’ small population, mostly from Cangas, gradually declined until the mid-20th century. The residents made a living chiefly from agriculture (potatoes, maize and market gardening produce), fishing for home consumption and oc-



*Remains of the old tavern on the dune, and, in the background, the former salting factory, now converted into a restaurant*

*Tourists arriving on Cíes*



cupations such as keepers or seasonal workers in the salting factories. Their chief forms of amusement were getting together in the taverns (La Isleña, Bar de Serafín, Bar Begoña and Casa del Chuco) and hunting. When the factories closed, some left and others made a living by selling fish on the coast, while along the coast people grazed cattle.

As the depopulation worsened, interest in tourism grew among the wealthier sectors, which initiated small-group visits to the islands at the beginning of the **20th century**. From the sixties this tourism became large scale and studies indicated a need to protect the islands' natural values. In 1980, the archipelago was declared a natural park and most of the territory is the property of the regional government.

During that stage and until the end of the 70s, every summer the Armed Forces sent a contingent to do survival manoeuvres on the south Island. All that remains of them are popular tales and the pilots' accommodation.

Cíes archipelago was declared Natural Park in 1980 and greater part is owned by Galician government.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Remains inaccurately assigned to the **Paleolithic** and **Neolithic** periods: *Campo Sanquiense* biface and a scraper among the Saint-Acheul bifaces used for shellfishing, and some poutadas used as weights with some kinds of fishing tackle.

From the **Neolithic Period** three hand mills, a bifacial carver and a triangular item for decoration have been found. There is also a deposit thought to be from that period containing ceramic and stone items that have yet to be classified.

The "As Hortas" site is the most noteworthy **Bronze Age** site. Greatly altered by later arable farming, it has about 4 or 5 quadrangular dwellings –due to the Roman occupation of the fort– that include double-leaved doors. The *concheiros* associated with that stage reveal primitive, simply decorated grey, ochre and orange pottery; and other more evolved techniques involving polishing and burnishing. An altar stone, spindle whorls (possibly a weight on a loom), decorative rope jambs and a fishing hook and clasp have been found there.

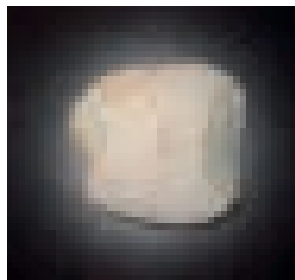
The **Roman** remains consist of urns, plates, pottery and necklaces on the Faro and Sur islands; and a peculiar ring in the Muxieiro area whose inscription is thought to be military.

The early religious constructions, which appeared at the beginning of the **Middle Ages**, were later altered:

- **Monastery of San Esteban, on Faro Island**

Rectangular ground plan, two storeys, made of granite, with a twosided sloping roof.

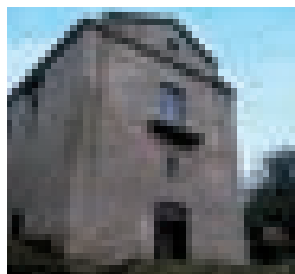
It conserves the original foundations on rock and, during its rehabilitation as a Nature Classroom several graves were found (one of them is on display), as well as the bones of men and women.



*Poutada*



*Pottery remains from the Castro*



*Former Santo Estevo Monastery, now an information point*



### • Chapel site and shrine on South Island

The chapel site looks out over the ocean and consists of a cell between walls of ashlar stone and the remains of the former roof. The shrine, located on the beach, is flanked by two columns and a central niche. At the back of the roof is a central finial like an arc with three ribs. The frontal features a cross and two pinnacles.

### SHIPWRECKS

The wrecks found in Cíes waters are the stuff of adventure.

*Bone remains found in the Convent of Santo Estevo*

- Stone anchors from the prehistoric period.
- The “Santo Cristo de Maracaibo”, a Spanish galleon full of valuable items sank near South island after the battle of Rande.
- German submarines from the Second World War sunk by allied frigates.
- Amongst several shipwrecks is the one involving the “Ave del Mar”, which lost its 26 crew members in bad weather. A cross was erected in their memory at the northern point of Isla Sur (South Island).

*Stone anchors*



## ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



### Settlers' houses:

Built of ashlar stone and blocks of granite, they have sloping roofs.

They were arranged as small independent farms: the family home included an oven, hearth and compartments for animals.

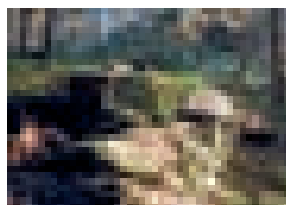
To supply the settlers, the islands were equipped with:

- **Forje:** with a stone oven and water supply – found on Isla Norte and one on Isla Sur.
- **Mills:** a horizontal one on Isla Sur, with upper channels and a windmill in the south of the lake, which was used until the 20th century.

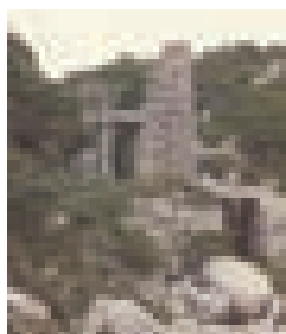
It is possible that raised barns to store the harvest existed, but only one foundation has been found in the area of Campana.

### Barracks of carabineers and jail:

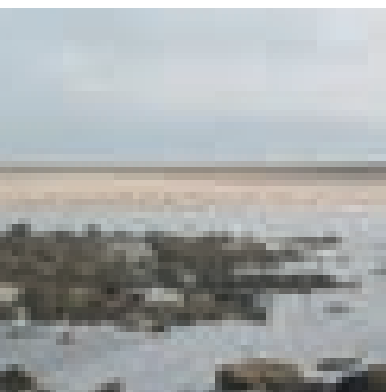
Both are near the beach of Nosa Señora. The barracks are two storeys high, rectangular and have several rooms. The jail consists of a series of buildings around a central inner courtyard. Associated with the jail was an artillery store, which was housed in the monastery.



*Ferreiros settlement, island of Monteagudo*



*Former mill on Isla Sur*



*Remains of the nursery  
in the lake*

### Salting factories, nursery and taverns.

All of them are associated with the islands' heyday. Salting factories: one at the Rodas wharf site and the other on Isla Sur. The latter still has the yard where the salting tanks used to be.

The nursery consisted of a house near the lake and an underwater structure at the bottom of the lake, whose walls can still be seen at low tide. The water was regulated by means of sluice gates in the dike that joined the two islands.

Near the nursery house was "La Isleña", a tavern run by El "Coxo". Its domed oven produced tasty pasties for sailors.

### Cemetery:

Founded in 1927. Small and special for its sloping layout following the lie of the land south of the lagoon, the cemetery contains some iron crosses. Below the stone supporting the base of the inner cross there is an ossuary.

*View of the hillside  
graveyard on Cíes*



### Monuments and tributes:

The barracks known as the "Monolith", demolished in 2008, was located at Muxieiro point and was built in honor of Franco in 1962. Other small tributes remember Jesús Molanes Gamallo, ranger involved in repopulating the forest; Fernando de Castro with a plaque near Nosa Señora beach, as one of the first lovers of the island; and the cross in honor of the "Ave del Mar" on the South island.



### Chapels:

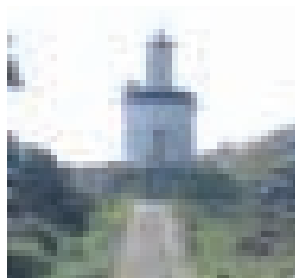
A small chapel dedicated to the Virgin of El Carmen, patron saint of sailors, was built in 1963. All that remains of the mosaic of the seated Virgin with child in her arms is her face.

On the South Island, a simple altar was erected in 1930 by a group of hunters who used the island in the 1890s.

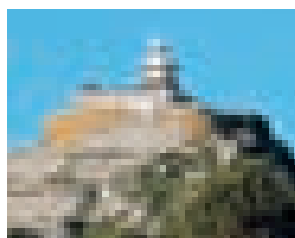
### Lighthouses:

There are four lighthouses on the Cíes Islands. The first one was built in 1852. Its 171 metre-high tower houses the light; ancillary quarters for the lighthousemen were built into the tower. Following several overhauls, the two structures were made separate and the light now functions automatically by means of solar panels. The other three lighthouses – Faro do Peito, Faro do Principe and Faro de Bicos – already in existence by the 20th century, stand at the entrances to the ria.

*Mosaic of the Virgin of El Carmen at the old chapel on the North Island*



*The lighthouse Faro da Porta also known as Faro do Príncipe Cíes lighthouse*



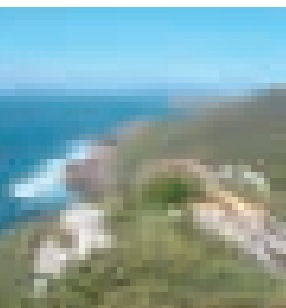
## Ons

*"The Blessed Company must be kept under surveillance at night. It is known by a light as red as fire and other white lights both ahead of it and in its wake. It travels from Noalla to Centulo and from there it walks above everything else, over the gorse, as far as the cemetery, where it disappears underground. When it appears, everything can be seen more clearly than now, as if it were daytime. They can talk to the dead and, if two people encounter it and one does not see it, all the one has to do is tread on the other's left foot for them to see it. Where it leaves the box, either today or tomorrow someone must die". Eugenia Otero, islander.*

### HISTORY

The very few remains from the **earliest period of history** on the Ons Islands are so dispersed that no guesses can be made regarding the existence of settlements or temporary settlers. However, there are remains and settlements dating from the castro culture of the **Bronze Age**. The slope above the Canexol neighbourhood is the site of one of them, known as "**Castelo dos Mouros**". Although as yet unexcavated, visitors can make out the circular arrangement. The defensive structures associated with this castro, or fort, are interpreted as a triple moat, which could mean that it is one of the most well-structured castros on the Galician coast if evidence proving the moats existed is discovered. The other *castro*, known as "**Cova da Loba**", is in the north of the island, but all that remains from it are pottery shards, tiles and large numbers of shells.

Recent archaeological survey work has brought to light the existence of several drawings or petroglyphs that are thought to date from between the fourth century B.C. and the second century A.D., artefacts that are practically unprecedented in the region.







*Despite being underground, traces of the structure of "Castelo dos Mouros" are visible on the surface*

The lack of exploration of the fort located in Canexol leaves us without information about its possible use by the Romans, who usually occupied pre-existing Celtic settlements. However, the Roman presence on the island is supported by the recent discovery of a reservoir in the vicinity of Canexol which, given its location and the structures and materials used, is associated with the exploitation of marine resources in Roman times (possible salting factory?). Geographers from this period named the islands *Aunios*.

Although the subsequent **Sueve and Visigothic occupation** in Galicia left no traces on Ons, the inhabitants most probably left in response to the attacks.

The Ons Islands first appear in a document in 899 (the **Middle Ages**), when King Alfonso III donated the "Aones Island" to the **Cabildo de Compostela**. That donation was ratified by later kingdoms until 1109 under Alfonso VI. Contemporary documentation points to the existence of the Church of San Martín, but there is neither indication nor trace of a congregation or any population.

Despite Viking attacks in the Early Middle Ages, there is known to have been a monastery on the island in the fifteenth century. No evidence about it has survived and although it is not known whether it housed monks on a regular basis, monks from the coastal hinterland went there for retreats and meditation. It is associated with a grave on Area dos Cans Beach, known as "Laxe do Crego", which dates from that time. Although now lacking the top stone, it is visible at low tide. The entire historical ensemble gave rise to popular legends among the islanders.



*View of Area dos Cans Beach, site of the "Laxe do Crego", said to be the grave of a monk who lived in the monastery*

In the **16th century**, the Church awarded the island as a domain to the Montenegro family. Written references to that domain indicate that it was inhabited and had a parish church. But from the end of the century it came under siege from English corsairs (the best known and most feared being Francis Drake) and from Turkish and Berber pirates. The sacking and burning of buildings which the settlers suffered until well into the eighteenth century made them flee to the coast.

In 1810, the **19th century**, the Junta Provincial de Armamento y Defensa decided to **fortify the island**. As the Montenegro family's property became safer as a result, it could be resettled. Two fortresses date from that period: one in the Pereiró neighbourhood, of which only a few stones are left (many were used for the houses), and another in Curro, a few metres away from the quay in the direction of Melide. Known as "Castelo de Rueda", it is the subject of unusual legends that tell of nearby caves.

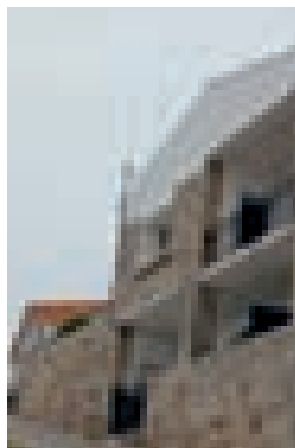
After the Army established a base there, the land was divided up into plots which the State awarded to islanders to be cultivated in exchange for a fee. Income from that source was allocated to meet the cost of the fortifications until, when the defensive projects were neglected, it was handed over to the lords of the island.

*Ruins of the fortification known as "Castelo da Rueda".*

In the period 1835-40 the first **salting factory** was installed near the quay, ushering in changes to island life. The

islanders took to fishing to supply the factory, and more people arrived from Barbanza, the island's economy improved and the population increased. Fluctuations in sardine fishing led to the decline of the company and eventually its closure, while the settlers' sold their catches on the coast.

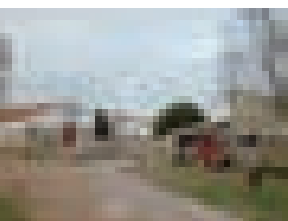
In 1929 - **20th century** - Manuel Riobó bought the Island, set up a **trading company** under the name of "**Isla de Ons**" which engaged in drying and marketing octopus and conger eel, and occupied the former salting factory. The islanders specialised in new species and all fisheries were managed via the company. The heir to the company, Didio Riobó, committed suicide at the beginning of the Civil War, leaving the island without any direct management.



*Building on the site of the former salting factory*

In 1940 the State expropriated the island for national defence, and the Army Ministry took charge of it in 1943 with the intention of setting up a submarine base, a project that was never realised. In 1960, it came into State hands once again and a local mayor was assigned to manage the island. From then on, the island of Ons came under various **State authorities**.

- In 1965, under the National Colonization Institute, a report was made that reflected the urgent need, amongst other things, to build a port suitable to take modern ships. The "Civic Centre" was built, with a church, school, warehouses and accommodation for teachers and doctors, but no improvements were made to the port.
- In 1975 IRYDA took over the island, but did not solve the anchorage problems.
- In 1979 ICONA (Nature Conservation Agency) set up offices in the Civic Centre. Its actions did not respond to the population's needs. Tired of the administration's lack of interest, they established their main residences on the coast, keeping their island houses as second homes for the summer.



*The new church in the Curro neighbourhood, with the civic centre opposite. Proximity to the quay makes it the busiest part of the island*

During the 40s-50s the island knew better times, and there were almost 500 inhabitants. The boys left school to go fishing with the adults until they could buy their own boat. The girls, on the other hand, got married, looked after their houses and children and tended the fields. They grew rye, potatoes, vegetables and raised cattle, oxen, sheep and goats. It was common to keep chickens and at least one pig. The abundant shell fish and fish initially meant a better diet, later becoming a profitable activity in which many islanders specialized. In such a harsh setting, everything was shared, and Sunday was the day that everyone congregated at the Civic Centre.

The progressive depopulation of the island went hand-in-hand with the rise in tourism, which reached a peak in the seventies. By that time, hostelry and leisure facilities were consolidated, and given the influx of visitors, they needed to be managed to protect and safeguard the natural resources.

State transfers of power to the Autonomous Region of Galicia in 1983-84 established that the territory came within the remit of the Regional Department of Agriculture, and, later, the current Regional Department of the Environment.



*Curro neighbourhood on the island of Ons*

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

There is a gneiss scraper and a trapezoidal carved granite piece from the Paleolithic era.

From the **Bronze Age**:

- Two Bronze Age axes.
- Castro “Castelo dos Mouros”: on the hillside at El Alto de Altura. Although it has not yet been excavated, some written documents identify a single very inclined enclosure and a separate antecastro separated by a ditch. Access is via a cut between 2-metre-high walls with a narrow passage in several sections which slope down to the settlement. Adjoining the settlement is a cave - “Cova dos Mouros”, which could be an entrance to the fort, as described in several legends known among the islanders.
- Outdoor drawing from Chan da Pólvora.

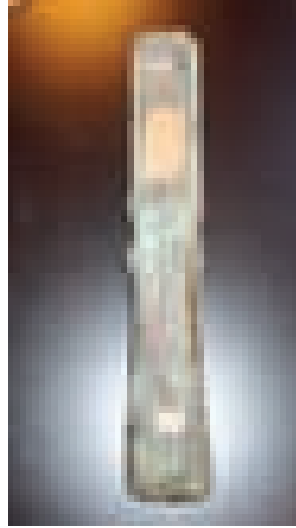
Two outdoor drawings found on the island –one is known as “Petroglifo de A Laxe”– are not attributed to a specific culture but are included within a period covering the fourth century B.C. to the second century A.D.

### Roman Times:

Recent archaeological studies establish a possible Roman salting factory on Canexol beach, although further study is needed to date the site.

### Middle Ages:

“Laxe do Crego” sarcophagus: a stone shaped like a human grave about 2 metre long, visible at low tide among the rocky reefs on Area dos Cans Beach. Popular tradition has it that it belonged to an old abbot when there was a monastery on the island.

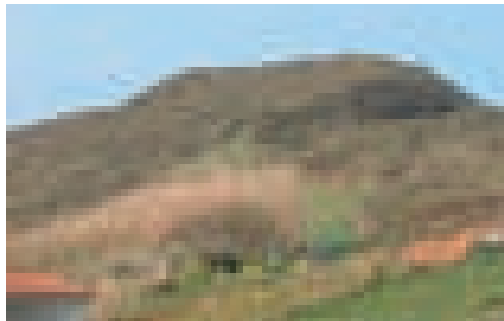


Axe



Outdoor drawings in Ons (petroglyph)

Buried fort settlement at Canexol

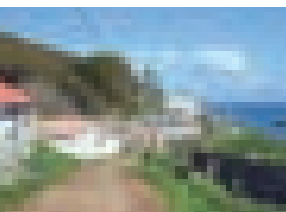


## ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



### Fortifications

The fortifications are not very important in spite of the fact that the island was fortified in two different periods – 1810 Junta de Defensa and 1943 the Army Ministry. The 24-m castle-style platform at Punta do Castelo known as “Castelo de Rueda”.



*Neighbourhood of Pereiró,  
in the south of the island*

### Housing and ancillary buildings:

Houses of the thirties were divided into two kinds. There were two storey - *casales*- for the rich and single-storey -*casetas*- for the rest. They had an oven and hearth and their windows looked out onto the estuary. Animals were kept in adjacent ancillary buildings or on the ground floor.

It is a well-known fact that every house has a number of raised grain stores. They are mostly made of stone and



*Typical celeiro-  
type grain store at  
the rector's house*

of the “celeiro” type, with a closed base and two-sided sloping roof decorated with crosses and pinnacles. There are two large ones behind the rector’s house around a central patio where celebrations used to be held.

### Fountains and wash troughs

Rich in water, Ons made the most of some of its natural springs to construct wash troughs in the 1950s in all the neighbourhoods or districts. Others – in Curro, Gai-teiro, Dornas, etc.- were fitted out to be used as drinking fountains.

### Religious constructions

The Chapel of San Joaquín, at Canexol, is small and simple. It is surrounded by the island’s cemetery and a recently built wall, which protects the ensemble. The bell disappeared years ago and religious ceremonies ceased to be held there in 1969. It contains a built-in stone font and a free-standing one in marble. There are no pictures or statues due to a fire in the 70s.

The church in the Curro neighbourhood was built for the Civic Centre but is not Galician in terms of aesthetics. It is decorated with mosaics and the bell tower is Mudejar style.

The nearby cross was erected after the Civic Centre and is thought to have been built as a symbol of the Atlantic route to Santiago.

*Chapel*



*Church*





*Ons lighthouse, one of the last manned by lighthousemen*

## Lighthouse

This historic lighthouse, erected on the top of Mount Cucorno, is manned by the last lighthouse men in Spain. Initially constructed in 1865 with a light shed by an octagonal lantern that could be seen for 17 miles, in 1926 it was rebuilt on the original base. Nowadays the lenses turn round on the light and the beam can be seen 35 miles away. The building adjoining the

tower includes housing for lighthouse men, a warehouse and workshop. The energy is supplied by recently installed solar panels.

## Dornas

Their origins lie in the early Norman vessels that invaded the coast around the tenth-eleventh centuries. They were locally adapted into a wooden inshore vessel. Very stable, they can be propelled with oars or a sail, which traditionally is of the Latin type.

When every family had acquired a *dorna*, family fishing changed to cooperative methods involving three men and a boy. The larger *dornas*, with a longitudinal deck beam of 5 or 6m, known as *xeiteiras*, are used for catching sardines. The smaller ones – 3 to 4m.- are known as *polbeiras* and are used for octopus. Nowadays many are fitted with motors and lights for safety and better handling.

*All the architecture, which originally had maritime associations, particularly in the case of Ons, is nowadays being restored and conserved.*



*The dorna, a vessel typical of Ons.*



## SOCIOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Isolation and lack of spiritual and medical services gave rise to a unique popular culture.

Legends, the Blessed Company, homemade remedies, traditions, etc. represent very valuable know-how, threatened with disappearance.

### Popular medicine

The difficulties in getting medical care gave rise to popular cures and medical know-how. Plants with special properties were used- sorrel, poison hemlock, mallows, elderberry, etc., elements and substances from animals and others used in the kitchen- cereals, ointments, feathers, excrement, etc., and rites were carried out to ensure that the remedies applied had the correct effect. They were used to treat respiratory and digestive ailments, women's complaints, rheumatism and ailments in animals.

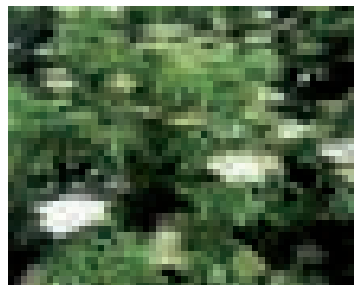
### Superstitions

Many sayings became popular and even conditioned life on the island:

- If a pregnant woman ate goose barnacles, she had to avoid water from the barnacle splashing on her face for if it did, the child would be born with a mark similar to part of the goose barnacle's body.
- If a person mistrusted someone, he or she had to go to Beluso and bring a toad to whose mouth they had attached a piece of clothing belonging to the person in question. As long as the toad keeps the cloth in its mouth, the loathed neighbour will always be "ailing".
- When one member of a group of fishermen fails to catch anything, he concludes that his boat has been bewitched and so goes out at night and propels it with a piece of broom until he is tired.



*Ons quay, the link with land*



*Many island plants have special properties that were used in popular medicine*



*Saint Joachim,  
patron saint of Ons*

## Celebraions and Gastronomy

The most celebrated festivities were Christmas, Carnival, Easter, St. John (San Juan), the patron saint St. Joachim (Joaquín) – in August– and San Martín (pig slaughter). These celebrations involved the preparation of delicious dishes and desserts typical of Ons such as *bandullo*, *lingotes*, *filloas*, *compota* and *buñuelos*.

On Ons there used to be a rich repertoire of popular local songs with coplas and desafíos that local women made up or adapted from pre-existing ones.

### Octopus fishing around Ons:

- *A la Seca*: at low tide with a boat hook.
- With a mirror: with a dorna and boat hook with a mirror.
- With a line: with a pole with hooks and crabs as bait.
- With a fish pot: an octopus trap.

Ons can boast a well known octopus-based dish called *caldeirada*.

*Ons is a unique island. Its cultural heritage, alive today, has an incalculable value that must be preserved.*

*Fishing boat loaded with pots*



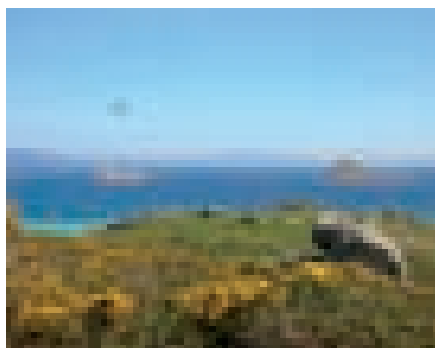
## Sálvora

*Tradition has it that “Sagres Man” (a legendary being who originated on the islets near Sálvora) and “El Falcoeiro” (idem) wished to woo “La Forcadiña” (idem). The two giants fought each other and the larger and stronger Sagres Man dealt a blow that sent jawbones flying near where they were fighting. During the harsh combat Sagres split his tongue in seven pieces, and some of the unfortunate “Falcoeiro”’s teeth ended up in El Carreiro, while the last teeth landed even further away than Los Prexeiros. After the fight, Sagres Man turned around and rested.*

*This legend, still recounted by elderly sailors in Aguiño, is reflected in the names of the many rocks and islets in the area: Home de Sagres, Falcoeiro, Forcadiá, Sete Linguas (seven tongues), As Moas (the teeth), Os Prexeiros e As Quixadas (the jawbones)..*

### HISTORY

Although **early peoples and influential ancient cultures** (Celts, Romans, Sueves, etc.) spread throughout Galicia, no data or studies exist on their settlements or the uses of the island at that time. Some archaeological remains found on the sands of Sálvora attest to the passage of these sailors but do not confirm their visit to the island. Historical references to Sálvora date from the end of the Early **Middle Ages**, when it belonged to the crown of Galicia and Asturias, and was donated by Alfonso II the Chaste to the Church of Santiago. There is said to have been a church on the island, but no remains or other evidence indicate that one ever existed.

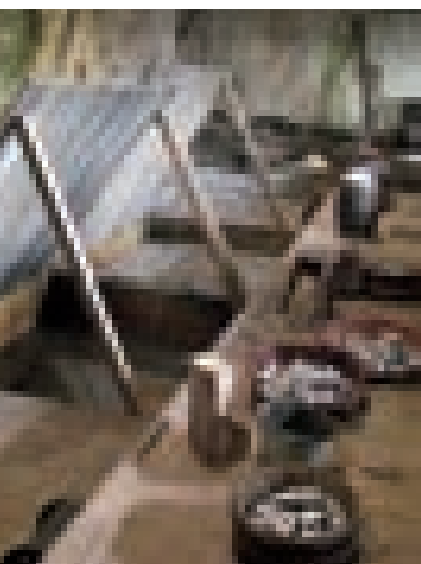




*The current stately home, Pazo de Goyanes, was built on the site of the former salting factory. It still has the shore access ramps*

In the Late Middle Ages, the island was used as a base for attacks by invading Vikings, Saracens, etc., making stable settlement impossible. When the fighting ended and calm reigned along the estuary, people living along the coast moved to Sálvora to settle and use the land. At that time, in the mid-sixteenth century, the Church handed the islands over as an estate to Marcos Fandiño Mariño. Until the beginning of the seventeenth century his rule and that of his heirs was based on a **feudal regime** according to which settlers had to hand over part of their harvests and livestock bred on the island to the “lord”.

Neither is there any evidence on the island of pirate attacks in the 17th-18th centuries; however, the rise of commerce and fishing at that time did find an echo there in the form of a factory known as “O Almacén” (some authors claim it was the first in Galicia and date it from 1770 to 1779, while others believe that it was those on other islands, which date from the early-19th century). A tuna fishing business was created in 1789, whose exclusive rights to the island and a radius of four leagues from the shore led to harsh confrontations with local sailors.



Such developments led to people living along the coast coming to settle the island. Families were grouped in the “Village” in houses where several generations lived together. There was no church or school, but the lighthouse keepers were good teachers. They grew corn, rye, potatoes, and each family had 7 or 8 cows as well as sheep, hens and rabbits. Everything produced was for domestic consumption. What they caught from their *dornas* (boats) did not have to be shared with the lord and provided a source of income. The only bar, next to

*Fish salting factory.  
Courtesy of Ficción producciones.*

the salting factory, was a place to meet and hear news from the coast.

In 1820, as a result of the marriage of Isabel de Mariño, who had inherited the island, to Ruperto Antonio de Otero, the Otero dynasty became the new owners of Sálvora.

The State expropriated the island from the Oteros in 1904 for reasons of national defence, and kept a small military detachment there until 1958. While they were on the island the settlers became colonists of the State without restrictions, which enabled them to enhance their living conditions by improving the houses, building new stables and better fishing vessels, etc.

In 1921, fifty nine (59) people lived on the island, but only 25 experienced the tragic shipwreck of the steamboat Santa Isabel to the south of the island. It happened on 2 January, when many settlers had gone to the coast for local celebrations. The brave people who remained, mainly women, set out in *dornas* to aid the victims. In December the same year a new lighthouse came into operation.

When the army withdrew, the Oteros recovered the island and resettlement got underway. The last inhabitants left the island at the end of the nineteen seventies.

The Otero family moved to "O Almacén", the former factory, which they converted into a pazo (stately home), turning the nearby tavern into their chapel. They used the island as a hunting reserve until the authorities banned hunting.



*The horses in Sálvora remember us the previous hunting activity at the island, now forbidden.*



*Coat of arms at the entrance gate of the pazo, the lineage of Otero.*



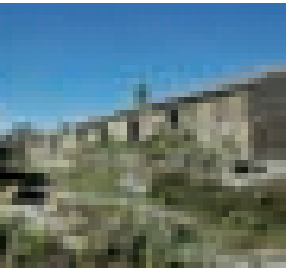
*Plaque commemorating the shipwreck of the "Santa Isabel":*

*"For young Carlos Verdier y Escobar, who disappeared in the shipwreck of the steamboat Santa Isabel, and in memory of the other unfortunate victims of the accident in these waters in the early morning of 2 January 1921. CARLITOS' grieving parents. Cadiz, 27 July 1921."*

## ACHITECTURAL HERITAGE



### The Village



*View of the village from the central patio-like open area*

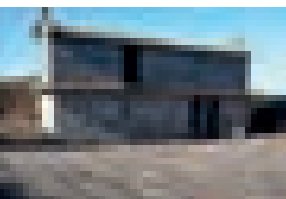
This ruined village is located in the northeast, above Punta de Pernaprada. The one-storey houses have shared walls and many conserve a small veranda at the entrance. They all look onto a central patio-like open area, which is for communal use. They also shared the use of raised barns, eight of which are still standing, and two mills –one near the lighthouse and another behind the beach of the *pazo*– which were occasionally used when bad weather made it impossible to carry the grain in vats to Castiñeiras for grinding.

Inside, the largest room is the kitchen-dining room where there was a hearth and an oven. Fairly modern stables and tool sheds were located in shared areas of the village.

A classic example of community living.

*The raised barns of Sálvora relate to the hard farm work and the good crops in the past.*

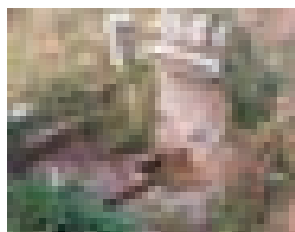
### Raised Barns



There are two stores at the entrance to the village. They are of the *celeiro* type, with a closed base and made of stone. Their two-sided sloping roofs are decorated with crosses and pinnacles.

### Santa Catalina Spring

Along a path 100 m. before reaching the village there is a spring/water fountain bearing a stone with an inscription that reads: "Virtuous Water Yields Health and Strength". It was built with material from the old lighthouse and is tied to legends of a tunnel under the sea that connects with the nearby coast.



*Santa Catalina Spring is along the path leading the village*

### Lighthouse

The first lighthouse was built in 1852 at Besugueiros Point. It was a class-four lighthouse emitting white and red light that could be seen ten miles away. There were quarters for the lighthouse keepers and a store. The tower was hexagonal with a small balcony. Initially, it ran on lamp oil and then on fuel oil. The second, (class-three) lighthouse, at the same site, was built following the shipwreck of the "Santa Isabel" in 1921. It was overhauled in 1954 to include generators, batteries and a store. Nowadays it operates using solar panels.



*Sálvora lighthouse*

The wharf was made to serve the lighthouse and the lighthouse men on El Almacén Beach. It is sheltered and fairly deep.



*The salting factory converted into a stately home and the sailors' tavern converted into a chapel*

### Pazo de Goyanes (stately home)

Built on the site of the former salting factory warehouse, it consists of two mansion-style towers and bears several heraldic shields. Opposite the main entrance is the chapel, formerly the island's tavern, and a little further north there is a lovely crucero or stone cross, with carved images.

### Sálvora Mermaid

On El Almacén Beach there is a stone sculpture known as the "Mariño Mermaid", about who it is said:

*"The Sálvora Mermaid dallied with a Roman gentleman who was shipwrecked on the island. A child was born, who was named Mariño. A descendent, Joaquín Otero Goyanes, Marchis os Revilla, decided to perpetuate the memory by erecting this statue. It is the work of prestigious Burgos sculptor Ismael Ortega Martín, and dates from 1968."*

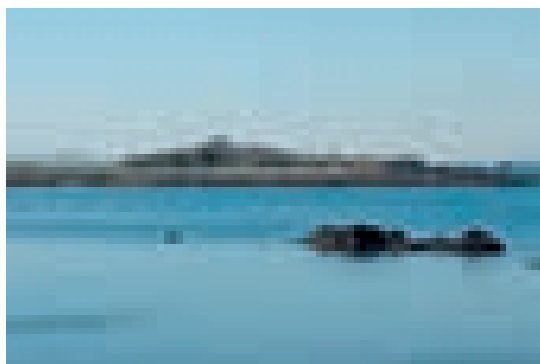


## Cortegada

*"When the Romans invaded Spain the islands of our estuaries were unknown, but later when Julius Caesar discovered how important they were, he sent Crassus to conquer them half a century before the advent of Christ, taking from the island of Cortegada and Abanqueiro the famous oysters and shellfish.*

*The geographer Strabon and Pliny described the island, which he called Corticata..."*

(Historical notes by Jesús Salgado de la Riva, highlighting Roman presence on the archipelago).



### HISTORY

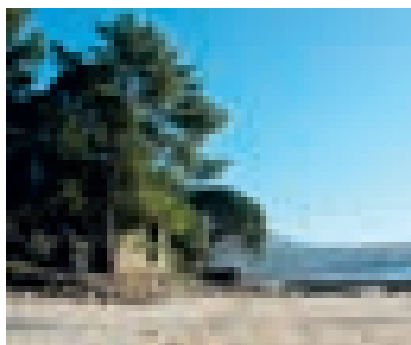
On Cortegada no signs or indications of fort settlement or *castro* culture were found, perhaps because it has not yet been well enough researched. There are, however, references to **Roman civilization**. The Romans called the island "**Corticata**" and several amphoras found in the sea nearby prove that they passed that way although it is not certain whether they settled it or not.

It is unknown if Sueves, Visigoths or Muslims made use of the island. In the ninth century (the Middle Ages) the king, Alfonso II, the Chaste, donated it to the Church of Santiago following the discovery of the tomb of Saint James the Apostle. The route along the River Ulla to take





*Livestock farming was common on the island*



*The settlement near the Beach and quay*

Saint James the Church's "riches" was highly enticing to the Vikings, who used the island as a strategic base from which to plan attacks to make off with the booty.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, when Galicia was awash in conflicts and afflicted by the black death, many people made the pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Cortegada (14th century) to plead for a cure for their ills. While a series of internal struggles for power went on, pirates and corsairs appeared in modern times along the entire coast, but it is not known whether they landed in Cortegada. The island was supervised by the Church starting in 1526 and a hospital-inn, which later served as a leper hospital, was built in 1652.

A settlement was constructed near the quay including a chapel and adjoining hospital. The estates that were given over to arable farming grew vegetables, corn and vines, and the stone drinking troughs that still stand among the houses are testimony to the cattle, hens and sheep were tended there. All residents and users of the estates were subject to the payment of rent to the "lord" of the island.

As a result of economic decline in the estuary area in the **18th century**, the town halls of Villagarcía and Carril- which had jurisdiction over the island-, decided to **donate Cortegada to Alfonso XIII** - at the start of the Bourbon reign- for use as a summer residence and to re-

vitalize the ria (estuary) economy. The whole province was involved in the project and, with the backing of the Royal Household, the act of donation was carried out in La Golpilleira (residence of Quiroga Ballesteros, owner of the island forum) on 19 August **1907**.

At that time (beginning of the **20th century**), there were 17 residents and many privately owned estates whose tenure was not clear, a fact that held up the donation process in legal terms. Rumours circulated on the island of a great palace and a lifting bridge. Finally, in July 1910, the definitive deeds relating to the donation were handed over in Madrid, but the pazo de la Magdalena (stately home) was already under construction in Santander. The uninhabited island became a royal hunting reserve, under the supervision of caretakers appointed by the king.

During the period of the Republic the island became State property (in 1931, following the exile of the monarchs) and a group of carabineers, the *guardia de asalto*, were posted there to guard it. The territory was recovered by the Bourbons in 1958 and Juan de Borbón decided to sell it in 1978 to the "Cortegada S.A." real estate company, which immediately made plans to develop the property on the grounds that it was a great opportunity for tourism.

*Forest within the island*



Conservationists wanting to safeguard its natural wealth and landscape (island families, neighbors and traditional users of the island) managed to halt the plans, and in 2001 the regional government attempted to have it included as public heritage. It became part of the Atlantic Islands National Park in 2002 in spite of being the private property of "Cortegada S.A." In 2007, coinciding with the anniversary of the donation, an Expropriation Jury ruled that the Xunta de Galicia (Galician Regional Government) pay €1.8 million in compensation and the archipelago of Cortegada is once again in public hands. Conservationists celebrated the much-anticipated "win" along with the President of the Xunta.

*Cortegada Island. Partial view of the island and Estuary*

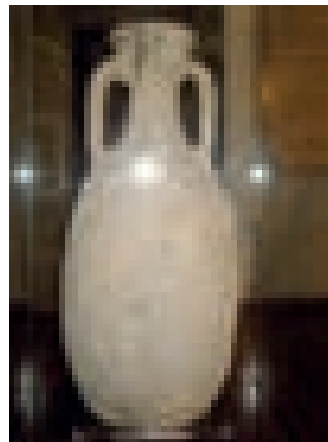


## ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Remains of pottery from the final phase of the Bronze Age, have been found in the sea near the island.

Three complete amphoras and the remains of other twenty. They date from the Roman empire. There are also wrecks from the same period.

*Roman amphora found in the sea near Cortegada*



## ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



*Coat of arms on the chapel*



### Sanctuary of the Virgin of Cortegada /Chapel

The sanctuary was originally located among the houses, but was moved south when the new chapel was built. The now ruined chapel dates from before the 14th century and has a coat of arms on its main façade; it once had many votive offerings. A pilgrimage in honour of the Virgin was held on 25 March and 8 September, but after the donation, the images and the votive offerings were moved away, and the pilgrimage was held for the last time in 1935.



*Chapel and cross*

### Little Hospital

The so-called “little hospital” was added to the original sanctuary and moved along with it. The remains date from 1652; it operated as a lazaretto until the 18th century.

### Crosses

This archipelago can boast a large number of *cruceros*, possibly due to the commemoration of the passage of the body of St. James the Apostle on its way to Compostela.

One is situated at Corveiro Point and at its base there is a pilgrim shell and cross. Another, depicting Christ crucified on the cross is in the chapel ante-room. The third is on the island of Malveira Grande.

*Cross at Punta Corveiro*





*Ruins of the settlement, channels and pía*

### Village/settlement

There were around 20 large houses divided up into compartmentalized rooms, and amongst them remains of presses, farming implements and *pías* for livestock. Above them there are channels to bring water from the island interior.

Recently-discovered remains found to the north of the town seem to belong to a large communal raised barn.

### Barracks of the Carabineers or Guardia de Asalto

In the western part of the island that looks out towards Malveiras, there is a stone construction with a huge entrance consisting of a relatively modern arch.



*The barracks annexed the former stables and possibly also a windmill (there are two mill stones)*

# 21st Century

## OBJECTIVE:

### Knowledge for conservation

The islands are an example of highly-valuable natural and cultural heritage whose conservation, in which we are all involved, will determine its future. The history and study of this heritage brings its strengths and weaknesses to light and we must act accordingly.

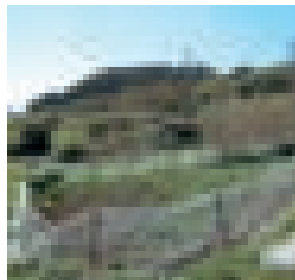
Activities currently carried out in the National Park reclaim traditional practices, its knowledge is explored and the activities are showcased in order to protect the natural and cultural heritage of this unique space.

Special mention must be made of the area's intangible heritage, the other side of the coin, which is supported and sustained by the region's material heritage: maritime culture (knowledge, know-how, place names, legends, etc.), island culture (traditions, stories and songs, celebrations and games, medicine and local cuisine, etc.), aesthetic values that are kept as memories after a visit to the islands: the silence, the beauty of nature, the smell of the sea, the feeling of freedom...priceless wealth.

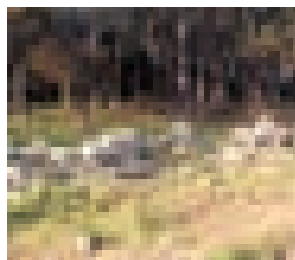
### Agriculture and livestock farming

The islands were cultivated to grow food for family home consumption. On Ons, the only island with a few remaining inhabitants, small market gardening allotments are still used for growing vegetables, corn, potatoes, etc. Fully organic fertilisers are used and the land is worked manually in the traditional way.

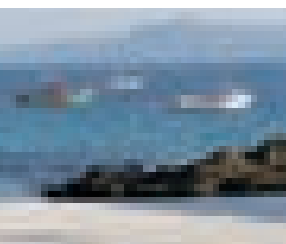
Of the livestock farming only empty stalls remain on Sálvora and a few hens, rabbits and sheep are kept on Ons. In the latter case, this traditional activity is monitored to ensure it has a very limited impact.



*Farmland in Ons*



*Remains of the walls that marked the boundaries of estates with fields or grassland for livestock.*



*Fishing activity in the marine area of the national park*

The requisite conservation measures to protect natural ecosystems throughout the park prevent the introduction of animals or plants that might impact on the islands' biodiversity. Only pre-existing traditional activities are allowed and monitored to ensure that they maintain biodiversity.

## Fishing resources

*Fishing and shellfishing are regulated directly by the regional government by means of plans governing catch volumes and/or exploitation, but those that take place in the National Park must also have permission from park authorities. Research is the basis for sustainable development in the area.*

The full panoply of diversity of the park's rich waters has been exploited through fishing, shell fishing and algae harvesting. The beaches even provided sand for building work (forbidden nowadays).

### Fishing

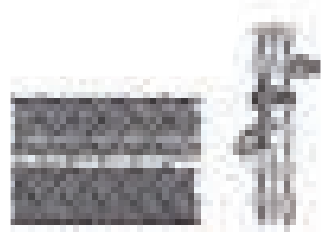
Only traditional fishing methods are permitted in National Park waters and include the use of a wide range of tackle that tradition and use have crafted into suitable methods for almost every kind of capture:

The art of drift netting or seine fishing: the purse seine and the "xeito" for pelagic species, particularly sardines and mackerel.

- Gill net fishing: consisting of one or more pieces of reinforced nets (falls, trammel nets, etc.); they are used to catch a great variety of fish and shell fish species: turbot, pollack, ballan wrasse, ray, pout, sole, spider crab, edible crab, spiny lobster, common lobster and cuttle fish.



*Purse seine fishing*



*Trammel net*

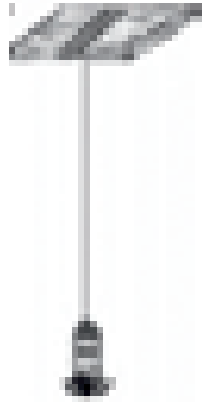


- Other methods involving longline or hooks::
  - Line: consisting of a main line from which pole lines with a hook are suspended.
  - Short longlines. Tackle with hook consisting of a main line with vertical branch lines hanging from it.
  - Trolling: tackle with a horizontal hook towed from a vessel.

These three methods are used to catch pelagic species such as mackerel, white seabream, ballan wrasse, etc.

- Squid jig: vertical line with a rod, at lower end it is equipped with several hooks. For squid or "pota" as it is known here.
- Traps: sunk and moored on the seabed, they act like a trap to trap molluscs and crustaceans
  - Fish pots: in the form of baskets consisting of a rigid frame covered in netting, equipped with one or more openings. Used above all for crustaceans such as lobster, European lobster, spider crab, edible crab, velvet swimming crabs and prawns.

The settlers of the islands always used non-industrial techniques to exploit the sea. The traditional nature of this activity is, for its cultural, ecological and economic values, the only one that makes exploitation compatible with conservation of the marine environment, and so is the only one allowed in the national park.



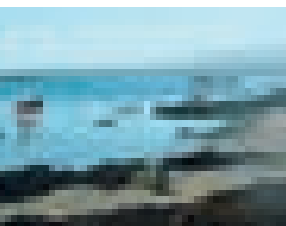
Jig



Fish pot

*Traditional boat fishing in park waters, watched over by a colony of European shag*





*Shell fishing on foot in Cortegada*



*Fishing boat with pots*

## Shell fishing

Thanks to the variety of ecosystems- cliffs, stretches of sand, shell seabeds-, the islands can boast abundant shellfish, a fact well known to islanders and people living along the coast. Different techniques are used depending on the species:

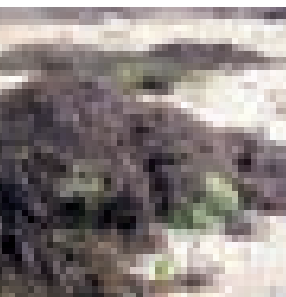
- Shell fishing on foot: At low tide in the intertidal zone, simple hoes are used to harvest clams, common cockles, etc. On the rocks specially adapted spades are used to collect goose barnacles.
- Shell fishing fleet: with vessels and different tackle.
  - Using *raño* or *endeño*- a long pole ending in a rake with a trough. For clams, scallops, etc.
  - Using pots- kind of box made of netting to trap velvet swimming-crabs, etc.
  - Others: by scuba diving or controlled use of tanks- balones, razor clams, sea urchin, etc.

As these techniques ensure catches are selective, sustainability can be ensured merely by monitoring catch characteristics.

## Seaweed, sea urchins, etc. harvest

Given the difficulty of fertilising the fields with organic products available on land, algae washed up on the beaches and rocks was harvested and spread on the land. Some were also used to cure and to make good cooking stock.

Nowadays this resource has a multitude of uses in medicine, food, fertilisers, cosmetics, etc. and is easy to harvest. However, it is crucial that harvesting be controlled so that other species are not seriously affected.



*Algae at low tide*

The demand for sea urchin, whose eggs are a sea-flavored delicacy, has increased and their harvest, also controlled, is booming.

## Tourism

In the 1960s growing tourist interest in these unique islands resulted in a great influx of visitors in the 70s and 80s. Fortunately, conservation groups investigated the effects of tourists arriving by land and sea, the waste they left behind and how camping led to disturbance to existing species, as well as the spread of new introduced species.

As biodiversity in all habitats was vulnerable, the authorities initiated studies with a view to safeguarding it. The current aim is to conserve this special environment by regulating public use.

Information on the park's natural and cultural values informs tourists how they should behave, making them responsible for and involved in conserving them.

***The enjoyment of all the islands have to offer is everyone's responsibility***



*Visiting becomes a more enriching experience when there are opportunities to get to know the area's natural and cultural values*