

V. National Park Surrounding Area



MUNICIPALITIES WITHIN THE AINP AREA OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFLUENCE



The national parks network aims to promote development of the national parks' areas of socio-economic influence as their involvement is a crucial factor in park conservation and management. The municipalities of Vigo, Bueu, Vilagarcía de Arousa and Ribeira all lie within the Atlantic Islands of Galicia National Park. In accordance with Act 15/2002 declaring the area a maritime-terrestrial national park, they comprise its area of socioeconomic influence. The series of municipalities may be enlarged in the future as is also laid down in the same Act, provided that it is set out in the Plan Governing Use and Management of the Atlantic Islands National Park currently being drafted.

Brief descriptions of the AINP municipalities are provided below, starting with the ones furthest south. They include technical data, a brief history and information on the key points of their cultural and natural heritage.

Vigo

- Province: Pontevedra.
- Total surface area of the municipality (Km²): 109.4 km².
- National park archipelago within the municipality: Cíes.
- Percentage of municipality land designated part of the national park: 3.96%.
- Percentage of surface area belonging to the municipality in the part of the National Park above water: 36.24%.
- N° of inhabitants in the municipality (IGE census of 01/01/2014): 296,479 inhabitants.

To understand and describe Vigo, it is first necessary to take into account its relationship with the sea, which has shaped the surrounding area and the city and moulded the people, who regard it as part of their identity. Its exceptional location, sheltered from the Atlantic storms on the ria and the richness of the environs mean it was settled as early as prehistoric times. The setting of this cosmopolitan city brought it into contact with the rest of the world via the port.

It is the largest city in Galicia, accounting for 32% of the population of Pontevedra province and 12% of that of the Autonomous Region. Although census figures put the number of inhabitants at around 300,000, there are nearly half a million people in the metropolitan area.

The municipality covers more than 100 km² of rugged terrain, forming a mountainous crown in which valleys channel water down to the sea. The splendid vantage points overlooking the city include Monte do Castro, with its remains of a former *castro* and a fort, and Monte da Guía, an important landmark for orientation for those making for the port of Vigo. It offers a sweeping panorama of the city and the ria, in which the ou-

tline of the Cíes Islands can be seen. The River Lagares, the panoramic Vigo trail and over thirty beaches are also part of this area's natural wealth.

In terms of cultural heritage, the stately home known as Pazo de Castrelos, which houses the Museo Quiñones de León contains finds from local archaeological sites, including those discovered in the Cíes archipelago. There is also an interesting historical and cultural ensemble, which can be enjoyed on a stroll through the recently restored Old Quarter (*Casco Vello*). Along the riverside, the El Berbés neighbourhood, with its characteristic colonnades, is a reminder of the history of this seafaring town.



*The city and Ría de Vigo
from the O Castro*

Bueu

- Province: Pontevedra.
- Total land surface area of the municipality (Km2): 31 km².
- National park archipelago within the municipality: Ons.
- Percentage of municipality land designated part of the national park: 15.16%.
- Percentage of surface area belonging to the municipality in the part of the national park above water: 39.34%.
- Number of inhabitants in the municipality (IGE census of 01/01/2014): 12,375 inhabitants.

The Concello de Bueu is located on the El Morrazo Peninsula, an impressive arm of land separating the Ría de Pontevedra and the Ría de Vigo. As with most towns on the Galician coast, its main sources of wealth since ancient times have been agriculture and fishing. Nowadays the former provides produce for home consumption and is clearly in decline in the face of other important sources of income such as tourism. The latter has profoundly affected the municipality's social and economic development. The seaside town of Bueu hosts one of the chief fishing ports in the El Morrazo district and southern Rías Baixas region. Most of the inhabitants are from fishing families, and, even today, fishing is the main activity of many of them. Estuary fishing, involving over 100 boats, which replaced the "ardora", (which made Bueu an important port in the local canning industry), dictates the daily bustle of its fish market.

Panoramic view of the seaside town of Bueu



The Romanesque church of Santa María de Cela, dating from the 12th century, and the Museo Massó reveal part of Bueu's past, which was always associated with fishing. The latter stands on the site of the salting factory, built in 1816 by a family of Catalan businesspeople, and marked the start of the local canning industry. From the mid-twentieth century, tourism beaches in the municipality, including Lapamán, Portomaior, Agrelo, Beluso, Tuia and Mourisca, views of the ria and the ocean from "El Outeiro" or El Alto do Rapadoiro and a network of signposted trails (Ruta dos Muiños, Ruta de Os Pazos, Cabo Udra and the El Morrazo Ecological Trail) are some of the many attractions that Bueu has to offer. But above all, the charm of this small town lies in its seaside ambience. In spite of continual changes, visitors can still drink in the atmosphere in while strolling through the port or enjoying the early morning bustle of the fish market.

Vilagarcía de Arousa

- Province: Pontevedra.
- Total surface area of the municipality (Km²): 47.4 km².
- National park archipelago within the municipality: Cortegada.
- Percentage of municipality land designated part of the national park: 0.92%.
- Percentage of surface area belonging to the municipality in the part of the national park above water: 3.66%.
- Number of inhabitants in the municipality (IGE census of 01/01/2014): 37,741 inhabitants.

The Arousa Estuary, the largest and richest of Galicia's *ría*s, with its more than 2,000 mussel trays, has profoundly marked developments in this coastal municipality in the extensive and well-known district of El Salnés. Among its twelve parishes is Carril, which in territorial terms is part of the Cortegada Archipelago

and, together with Vilaxoan and Vilagarcía, accounts for most of its inhabitants. Along with its fishing port, formerly one of the most important in Galicia, the building in 1873 of Galicia's first railway facilitated the expansion and growth of the area as a whole. Nowadays most activity centres on the fishing and shell fishing sectors (involving the important commercial port of Vilagarcía), industry and tourism, the latter having developed a great deal in recent decades.

Archaeological finds, including the petroglyph dos Ballotes, *castros* (fort settlements) such as Carril, Castrogudín or Lobeira and the Roman remains of baths, mosaics, pieces of pottery, coins and the former Via XX, which joined Cambados and Iria Flavia, are some of the mute witnesses to Vilagarcía's history, which was marked by its exceptional strategic location. The imposing *pazos* (stately homes) of Rubiáns, Vista Alegre and O Rial amongst others are illustrative of the wealth of monuments in this area.



Port of Carril.
Vilagarcía de Arousa

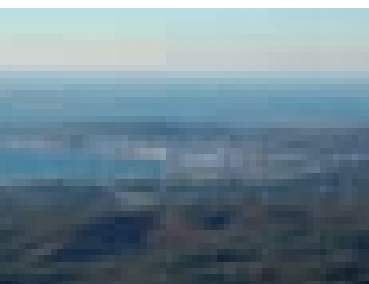
The major feature of the municipality's natural heritage is the sinuous outline of the Arousa Estuary. The best way to discover it is to take one of the signposted routes across the Vilagarcía countryside, such as to Xiabre and Mount Lobeira, from where it is possible to enjoy magnificent views of the mouth of the River Ulla, the Arousa Estuary and a large part of the O Salnés Valley.

Riveira

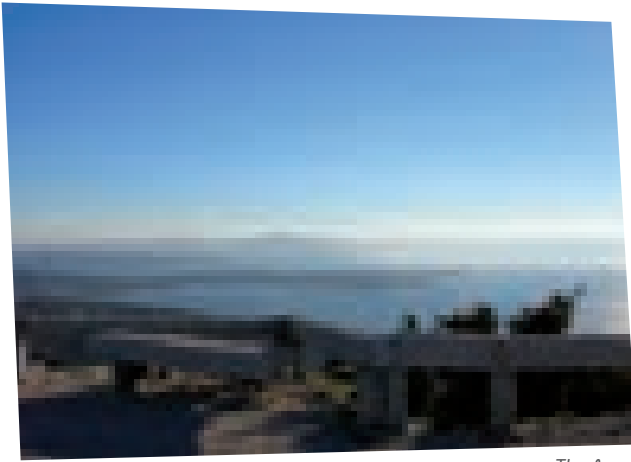
- Province: A Coruña.
- Total surface area of the municipality (Km²): 65.10 km².
- National park archipelago located in the municipality: Sálvora.
- Percentage of municipality land designated part of the national park: 3.81%.
- Percentage of surface area belonging to the municipality in the part of the national park above water: 20.76%.
- Number of inhabitants in the municipality (IGE census of 01/01/2014): 27,811 inhabitants.

The municipality lies at the southwest end of A Coruña province at the end of the land separating the Muros and Arousa estuaries, the Barbanza Peninsula. One of its parishes is Aguiño, to which the territory of the Sálvora archipelago belongs. Its strategic location has made it suitable for settlement since ancient times. In recent decades the town has grown thanks to the development of tourism. The other major economic activities are fishing, shell fishing and associated industries have always been sources of wealth for the shoreline population. In fact, the port is still one of the most important in Spain for estuary fishing.

Santa Uxía de Riveira and Aguiño with the Sálvora archipelago in the background



Santa Uxía de Riveira, now the most important urban area in the municipality, started out as a small seaside village. It still conserves examples of popular architecture, e. g. stately homes such as Pazo de los Marqueses de Revilla. The name refers to the marquises who own Sálvora Island. The so called “Phoenician port” in Aguiño is also part of the municipality’s rich cultural heritage and preserves remarkable remains from much more remote times: vestiges of a prehistoric village on Mount Castro (Carreira parish), the engravings of Laxe das Cabras and the Axeitos Dolmen, a recently restored megalith popularly known as “Pedra do Mouro” in Oleiros parish.



*The Arousa Estuary
from the A Curotiña
look out point*

As for natural heritage, Riveira can boast an exceptional setting full of contrasts. The best place to confirm that statement is the windblown of A Curota, viewing point, the most westerly peak of the Sierra de A Barbanza. From an altitude of 816 m, you can make out the singular outline of the coast, with the markedly curving Arousa Estuary and Sálvora Archipelago in the foreground. There is also the Corrubedo dune complex and the Carregal and Vixán lagoons, the Xuño lagoons in Porto do Son municipality, and, the ever-present and unquestionable leading protagonist - the deep blue Atlantic ocean.

Other interesting municipalities within the scope of the AINP

Besides the AINP municipalities as such, a further series of settlements has close links to it thanks to their proximity, the fact that various boat companies that bring visitors to the islands are based there and for their interesting heritage. All traditional seafaring towns, they have witnessed a considerable increase in population in recent years due, above all, to a rise in tourism thanks to the mild climate in the Rías Baixas area, the beautiful setting framed by the blue Atlantic Ocean and the unquestionable charm of the local towns.

Sanxenxo and Portonovo, besides Bueu, from which ferry boats left for Ons Island. Other municipalities including Pontevedra and Pobra de Caramiñal have been incorporated in recent years, albeit less regularly.

Strategically located on the southwestern coast of the El Salnés Valley, **Sanxenxo**, this former small seaside town is nowadays one of the major tourist sites in Pontevedra province. Its 24 km of coastline stretches from Sta. María Point on the Pontevedra Estuary to A Fienteira on the Arousa Ría and is the main attraction in this municipality. **Portonovo**, a small traditional fishing town near Sanxenxo, framed by the lovely beaches of Baltar and Caneliñas, is nowadays also a tourist centre where modern yachts moor alongside traditional fishing vessels, whose products are displayed in the modern fish market. La Carballeira de Leirana in Aldariz and Adina Parish Church are examples of the natural and cultural wealth of this municipality.



*Portonovo from
Silgar beach in Sanxenxo*

It is possible to reach Cíes Archipelago from Vigo, as well as via the ports of Cangas del Morrazo and Baiona.

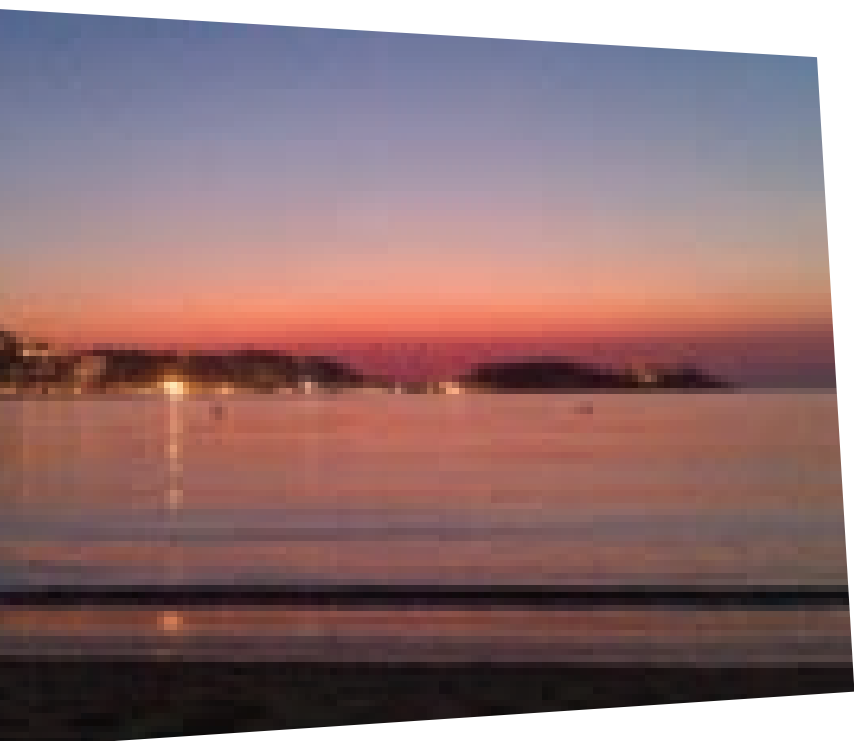
Opposite the Ría de Vigo on the spectacular arm of land separating that Ría and the Ría of Pontevedra -the El Morrazo Peninsula - is **Cangas** municipality. The beginnings of its earliest history lie in the remains of the castros of El Castelo, Liboreiro or Mount O Facho, a spectacular lookout point. The most recent history of this seaside town lies in the skeletons of former buildings such as the whaling station or the huge Massó canning complex dating from the time when the town was at the height of its splendour. They can be seen on a short trip along the coast. Nowadays, economic activity centres on fishing and, of course, tourism given the magnificent setting, including beaches, such as Nerga, Barra and Melide, and the spectacular cliffs of Costa da Vela. Cape Home lighthouse, from where the outline of Monteagudo

Island in Cíes is visible just 2.5 km away, keeps permanent watch over boats entering the Ría de Vigo.

*Cangas
do Morrazo*



The town of **Baiona**, located at an exceptional spot 21 km south of the city of Vigo, has always had a special place in history. At the beginning of March every year, the arrival of the caravel *Pinta* with the news of the discovery of America is commemorated. Continually attacked and besieged, the city built the castle fortress of Monte Real, nowadays a *parador* (State-run hotel), for its protection. The city centre has been declared a medieval historic ensemble. A stroll through the narrow streets of the old part, the vast beaches of the municipality or the trail that skirts the hill known as Monte do Boi, which affords views of the impetuous Atlantic Ocean with the Estelas and Cíes islands in the background, will enable visitors to appreciate the cultural and natural wealth of this strategic site.



*Sunset.
Baiona and Monte do Boi
from the A Ladeira beach.*



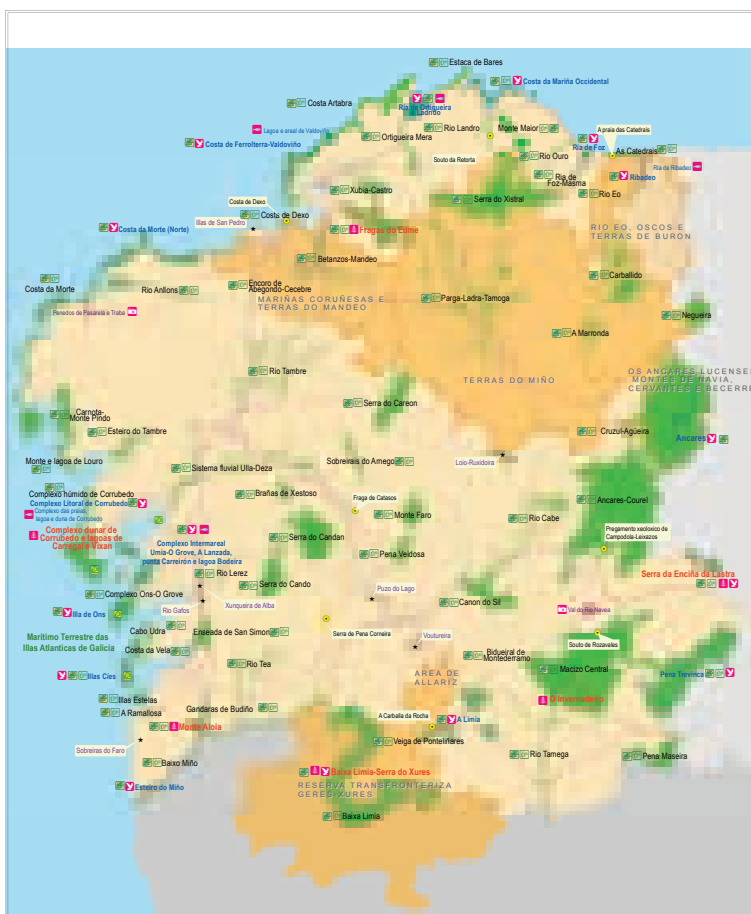
*Grain store and cross,
two examples of popular
architecture in Combarro*

In addition to places historically and administratively linked to the national park, the Rías Baixas can boast many interesting sites. Information is available from the bodies mentioned in the “Useful Addresses” section of this guide. The historic ensembles of **Pontevedra**, for example, offer guided tours in summer through one of the best conserved old quarters in Galicia. **Combarro**, symbol of Galicia’s seafaring and agrarian culture, **Cambados**, a stately town in the heart of the Comarca do Salnés and cradle of Albariño wine production, and A Guarda, a border town watched over by Mount Santa Tegra, home of the first settlers, are a must for any visitor wishing to comprehend a culture as ancient and rich as Galicia’s.

Natural Heritage in the Environs of Atlantic Islands National Park

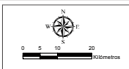
Galicia is a land of contrasts. The environmental variables of this geographical area (climate, terrain, soil, etc.) have determined to a great extent the distribution of the different ecosystems, which without a doubt maintain a special link with the nearby ocean.

*Map of the Galician Network of Protected Natural Areas.
Ministry of Environment,
Planning and Infrastructure.*



ESPAZOS NATURAIS PROTEXIDOS DE GALICIA

REDE GALEGA DE ESPAZOS PROTEXIDOS		REDE NATURA 2000	OUTROS ESPAZOS
	Parque Nacional		ZEPA
	Parque Natural		LIC
	ZEPVN		Monumento Natural
	Humidal Protexido		Paisaxe Protexida
	Parque Natural		ENIL e EPIN
	Parque Natural		Reserva da Biosfera



Its almost 1,700 km-long coast makes a sharp contrast with the inland mountain ranges, giving the region a very great biological and landscape diversity, to some extent represented in the region's current protected natural areas (although other areas not included as such). The foremost example is Atlantic Islands of Galicia National Park.

In such a small guide as this it is only possible to make a short summary of the natural areas nearest the national park, giving visitors the chance to get to know the surrounding area and learn a little more about what Galicia is like. Although human intervention has had a notable effect on the landscape, small natural gems have been conserved. The Rías Baixas, sheltered by the archipelagos that make up the national park, are a few examples. We must all help to maintain the at times precarious balance between development and environmental conservation.

Natural parks:

- Mount Aloia. Located in the municipality known as Concello de Tui (Pontevedra) in the Baixo Miño district, it is part of the rugged coastal mountains of El Galiñeiro, where maximum altitude is around 700 m.

From El Alto de San Xiao, at 629 m, there is a wonderful view of a large stretch of the River Miño as far as its mouth. Although some native vegetation has been conserved in small strongholds of oaks, cork oaks or riverine vegetation, the countryside was mostly restocked with non-native species, which gave rise to a very interesting arboretum. A visit to the unique building housing the Interpretation Centre will allow visitors an in-depth view of local features and provide information on the many routes available.

*Muiños de Tripes
on Monte Aloia*



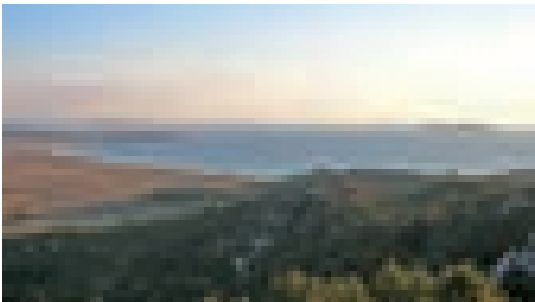
- Corrubedo Dune Complex and Carregal and Vixán Lagoons: Located in Concello de Ribeira (A Coruña), most of the ecosystems to be found on the Galician coastline occur in the almost 1,000 hectares of land. There is the great shifting dune (at 1.2 km long, 250 m wide and 15 m high, the largest in the northwest of the Peninsula), and the complete adjoining dune system, as well as marshes and lagoons of Carregal (saline) and Vixán (freshwater). Its location and special ecological features have made it home to a large variety of animal and plant species, a fact that has earned it recognition as a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance and as a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA). It is advisable to call in at the Interpretation Centre, where besides acquiring all the information they need, visitors can find out about the various guided and non-guided trails through the area.

*Shifting dune
at Corrubedo*



Protected wetlands:

- Umia-O Grove Intertidal Complex, A Lanzada, Punta Carreirón and Lagoa Bodeira: Located in the O Salnés district of Pontevedra province, this complex coastal system consists of the O Grove inlet, the mouth of the River Umia, the A Lanzada Isthmus, Carreirón Point (southern end of Arousa Island) and Bodeira Lagoon. It has been declared an SPA and a RAMSAR site for the great variety of habitats it contains, including the underwater meadows of zostera, the natural breeding ground that attracts a large number of wintering aquatic birds and makes this area one of the best places to see them.
- Corrubedo beach, lagoon and dune are already included in the Corrubedo Natural Park.



The isthmus and beach of A Lanzada, with Ons in the background, from Alto de Siradella

Special Protection Areas for Natural Values (Red Natura 2000):

- A Ramallosa: La Ramallosa Marshes, where large numbers of wintering and migrating aquatic birds gather, lie at the mouth of the River Miñor, protected from the open sea by a sand bar and the dune system of La Ladeira beach on the inlet of the well-known tourist destination of Baiona.

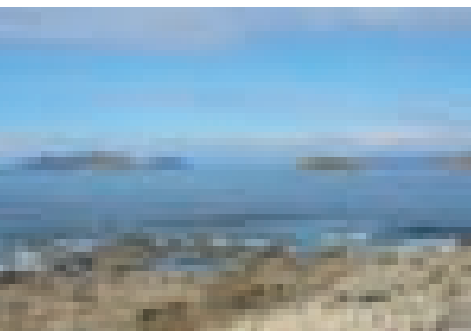
- **Baixo Miño and River Tea:** natural border between Spain and Portugal, the last section of the River Miño and its mouth sustain a complex and ecologically valuable estuary system featuring habitats typical of marshes. Large numbers of aquatic birds congregate there in winter. Along the course of the river there are interesting fish communities. Salmon, at the southernmost limit of its range in Europe, and lamprey, which is traditionally fished in these waters, are typical species.
- **Cabo Udra:** This attractive spot is located at the end of the small Aldán estuary, an appendage of Pontevedra Ría. From the rocks, shaped by wind and the sea, you can see the imposing island of Ons, protecting the estuaries from the ocean's might. Besides the landscape, the richness of the seabed here is another reason for its having been declared a protected natural area.
- **Ons-O Grove Complex:** The 7,470 hectares of this area include the Umia- O Grove Intertidal Complex and the Ons Archipelago, which are in the Atlantic Islands National Park. As a whole it is a wonderful example of coastal environments, with coastal cliffs, well conserved dune systems, brackish marshes, freshwater lagoons and extensive intertidal areas of sand and mud. The latter are crucial for feeding the thousands of birds that stop over in winter or on migration.
- **Corrubedo Wetland Complex:** Located in the Town Halls of Porto do Son and Riveira, this area includes, besides Corrubedo Natural Park and Sálvora Archipelago, the dune systems of Xuño and Basoñas and the coastal lagoons of Muro and Xuño. After Cape Corrubedo, this ensemble is one of the most exemplary sections of Cantabrian-Atlantic coastline.
- **Costa da Vela:** This spectacular balcony over the Atlantic, at the western end of the El Morrazo Peninsula, consists of cliffs covered in thick scrub typical of this kind of area. They are complemented by several dune systems and some of the loveliest beaches in the Rías Baixas. The views of Ons and Cíes, just under

*Cabo Home
Lighthouse*



3 km away, enhance this spot in natural and landscape terms.

- **San Simón Inlet:** This part of the interior of the Ría de Vigo, protected from the force of the ocean by the narrow mouth of Rande and the islets dotted around it, such as San Simón, Castelo and San Antonio, feature an extensive intertidal area with mud and sand covered in seagrass meadows, a wonderful resource for waders on passage and for the thousands of wildfowl that congregate there in winter.
- **Gándaras de Budiño:** This series of wetlands, enhanced by the seasonal spates of the River Louro, stands out for its size and well conserved riverine woodland with a predominance of alder trees, ash trees and willows as well as a marshy area with a varied range of aquatic vegetation and peat land. The fauna associated with this kind of habitats is also important, e.g. aquatic birds, particularly wildfowl. They can be seen from hides in the environs.
- **Illas Estelas:** This small archipelago consisting of two islands that shelter the Baiona inlet from the open sea while they cannot be said to be eye-catching landscapes they do stand out for their large seabird colonies thanks to the extraordinary richness of the seabed; the variety of species is determined by the diversity of substrates, including the artificial reef formed from fragments of a sunken merchant ship, which the sea and time have integrated perfectly into the environment.



The silhouette of the Cíes Islands can be seen behind the Estelas islets.

- **Río Lérez:** The lower section of this long curving river, which rises in the Sierra do Candán at 900m and discharges into the Pontevedra estuary, features well conserved riverine woodland along the riverbanks, small oak forests and gorse and heather scrub as well as fisheries, with such threatened species as salmon.
- **Serra do Candán:** This medium-high mountain range, less than 40km from the coast, is part of the Dorsal gallega, the range that runs across the region from north to south. Its gently rounded relief, which reaches maximum height on El Candán peak, at 1070m, consists of eroded rises alternating with high plateaux, ideal habitat for species such as the wolf. Here and the nearby Serra do Suído can boast one of the best populations in Western Europe.
- **Ulla-Deza River System:** The River Ulla, the third in Galicia in size after the Miño and the Sil, forms, from its source to its mouth in the Arousa Estuary, a green corridor with outstandingly valuable riverine forest and associated fauna and fish species, some as iconic as the salmon and the lamprey. There are also lovely spots such as the River Toxa Falls, which flow into one of the main tributaries of the Ulla, the impetuous Deza.