
IV. Visit to the National Park



PUBLIC USE IN THE NATIONAL PARK

Due to the uniqueness and/or representativeness of its natural values, National Parks are natural areas considered to be of national interest and worthy of special protection, where the use and enjoyment of them must necessarily be compatible with the primary purpose for which were created - their conservation. This is the reason why they are equipped with systems for public use that articulate, design and develop strategies and programmes to promote the active participation of all in achieving this end.

Before delving into this issue, it is important to know what we mean by Public Use. The following definition is the reference used in the National Park to develop work in this area:

“Public Use is a set of programmes, services, activities and facilities which, regardless of who manages them, must be provided by the management of the protected area in order to make visitors acquainted with its natural and cultural values, in an orderly, safe manner and to ensure the conservation, understanding and appreciation of such values through information, education and an explanation of heritage” (*EUROPARC-Spain 2005*).

The complexity of our NP, with 86% of its area under water and the rest divided among four archipelagos, coupled with factors such as access conditions, the marked seasonality of visitors and the impact from tourism and professional activities on the medium, make conservation with the use and enjoyment of the space a particularly delicate task as far as conservation is concerned.

The team working in the Public Use of the Park, therefore, has developed a series of projects aimed at both the surrounding population (whose involvement is a fundamental pillar in the conservation of the environment) and at the general public visiting the islands, framed in the following lines of action:



Schoolchildren on a guided tour on the Cíes Islands

- **Welcome and facilities:** the National Park has various facilities that meet the requirements for attending to and supervising people who visit this natural space, such as offices, visitor centres, information booths, toilets or bird observatories. These infrastructures are located in strategic and accessible locations.
- **Information:** the goal is to provide real and potential visitors with all the information required for a successful, quality visit, to enable them to learn and enjoy the values of the Park, but also the rules that ensure its protection. The offices and Visitors Centre are open all year round and the information booths and centres on the islands are open when there is regular transport. Internet provides access to the latest information on events and activity programmes.
- **Signposts:** the Park has signs and panels informing on the location of services, routes and other aspects such as zoning in this natural space, important for the safety, enjoyment and use of the visit.

Welcome panel next to the information booth in Cíes



- **Environmental Disclosure:** Disclosure and dissemination of natural and cultural values of the National Park serves as a tool to promote awareness and conservation. In this regard, the National Park conducts actions such as guided tours, lectures, seminars, workshops, exhibitions and other specific actions aimed at all age groups.
- **Interpretation of heritage:** in order to reveal “in situ” the meaning of natural and cultural values of the National Park to the general public visiting the islands, guided routes provided by specialized interpreter guides in the context of an interpretative plan are available, in periods when there is an increased influx of visitors to the islands.
- **Environmental education:** promoting conservation of the National Park among visitors and the surrounding population is considered essential, as it enables citizens to feel the natural space as something close to them, and thus become involved in conservation and understand the actions carried out by the Administration to meet the objectives. It is for this reason that environmental education is an essential tool for conservation, and so the park is an educational programme for schools, as well as involving a variety of educational activities for other groups.
- **Communication and participation:** it is important to allow visitors to comment and participate in the management of natural areas through surveys, complaints and suggestions that are answered by the Administration. Users’ opinions on the natural space are studied and eva-



Schoolchildren on a guided visit to the archipelago of Ons.

lated, and regular meetings with collectives related to the management of this natural space, such as fishermen's associations, representatives of the municipalities in the area of socio-economic influence, etc. are also held. The PN's accession process to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is an example of citizen participation.

- **Volunteers:** as regards participation and involvement of society in the management and conservation of this natural space, volunteer activities are organized in which different groups with an interest in nature conservation work with the National Park conservation tasks, such as beach cleaning, removal of invasive species and support tasks related to public use.
- **Training:** to ensure that staff in contact with the visitor have the appropriate know-how regarding the natural and cultural values of the National Park and skills attending to the public, work is carried out on improving the training of workers in the Park as well as providing training courses and guide train-



Group Work Camp volunteers Cíes.

ning for tourist informers on the environment of this natural space.

- **Publications:** in order to make the natural values of the Park known, several publications are drafted and edited, such as the visitor's guide to the National Park, field guides on land plants and marine animals, scientific and educational publications on the flora and fauna, on the physical environment, ethnography, teaching materials for educational programmes, etc.
- **Safety:** the National Park Administration carries out actions to improve the safety of visitors, such as fencing off the dangerous areas, improvements to pathways and facilities, as well as establishing recommendations for the comfort and safety of users of this natural space.
- **Follow-up:** in order to keep track of visitors and the area used by the public in this National Park, and thus be able to assess the achievement of the objectives set by the management, there is a follow-up of management, while a quantitative and qualitative analysis of visitors is carried out, mainly through surveys. The first, leading to data on the influx and distribution of visitors in the park, the main objective being to provide information to adjust the number of visitors to the load capacity of the natural environment, using criteria based on the impact caused by visitors on the environment and on the quality of the visit. The second, which analyses the profile of visitors, their demands and requirements and their degree of knowledge about the place, sets out to evaluate the satisfaction of the visit as well as to provide information in order to regulate the most appropriate for the visitor and for the conservation of the National Park.

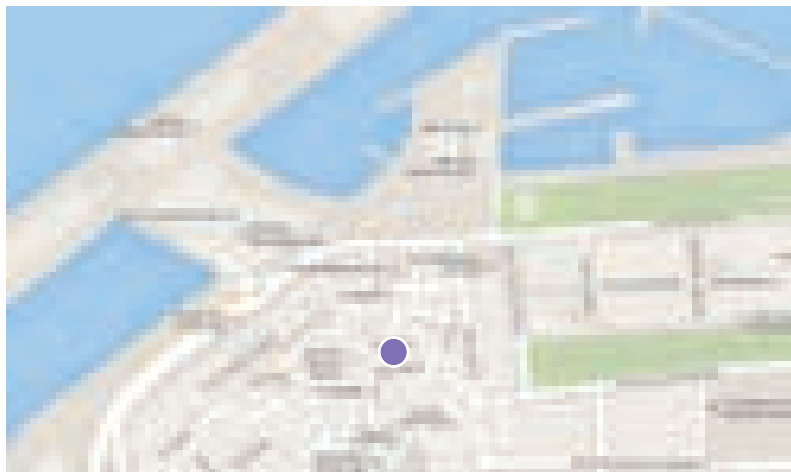
SERVICES AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

In order to provide visitors with a personalized service that allows them to get to know the protected space and to enjoy a quality visit, the National Park has a number of specific facilities, as well as the basic services required for receiving and accommodating visitors.

Administrative Offices

These offices are located in Vigo, in the old quarters and near the Ferry Terminal, from where ferries depart for the Isles of Cíes. They share space with the Visitor Centre in the Cambon building, which was refurbished specifically for these facilities, and was opened in December 2012. Located on the 2nd floor of the building, the offices cover all areas of work (management, technical, Public Use and management), a small lounge with library and toilets. On the 3rd floor is a room for courses, meeting room, offices and toilets. These and other access units are accessible to people with reduced mobility.

Location map of the offices and Visitor Centre on the National Park

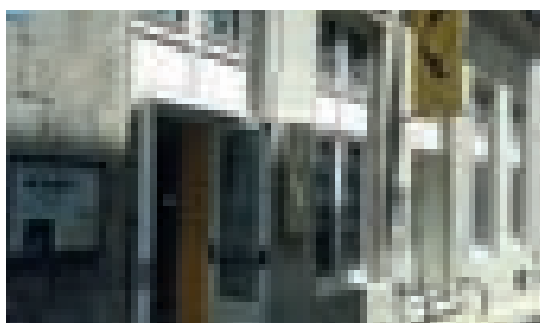


Visitor Centre on the National Park

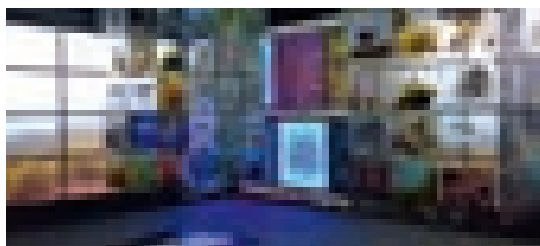
Standing next to the park offices, in the Cambón Building, in Vigo. Being located in a historic building, the distribution of the different areas has been adapted to the original characteristics. The first floor houses the reception, where visitors may obtain all the necessary information about the National Park and visits. The display elements are distributed over three floors, which according to the project design for the centre, correspond to the skin (geomorphology), the heart (biodiversity) and the soul (history and ethnography) of the islands. The centre is complete with an auditorium located on the ground floor, where various audiovisual projects, outreach and training events are held. Its facilities are accessible for persons with reduced mobility.

It is open all year round, and apart from welcoming individual visitors, the Visitor Centre welcomes participants from different teaching programmes on the National Park as well as visits and other specific activities for organized groups.

*Front Visitor
Centre National Park*



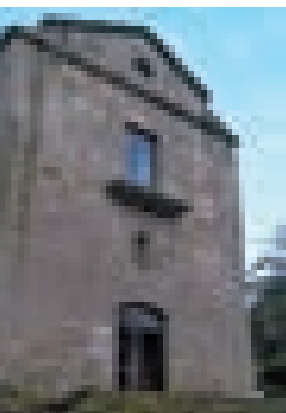
"Teleporters"



*Information Booth on the
Isle of Ons*

Information Booths

The Cíes and Ons archipelagos have information booths located near the passenger piers. These points are attended by guides and informers during periods of regular transport, covering the weekends in May, Holy Week and the summer season. In addition to information, these posts offer other services, such as book lending, support material for people with special needs, managing lost property or guided tours. On the Isle of Cortegada, a booth is also located just a few meters from the pier, and currently opens depending on the availability of wardens on the island. On the Isle of Sálvora, there is currently no information booth, although wardens receive authorized groups and visitors to the archipelago and are responsible for providing all the information required.



*Facade of Cíes
Information Point*



*Visitors Centre
on the Ons Archipelago*

Visitor Centres on the archipelagos

- **Cíes Information Centre:** located on the Isle of Faro, just over 1 km from the information booth, next to the main pathway. This building, a former 19th century artillery warehouse, was renovated in 1997 to accommodate the Interpretation Centre of the then Natural Park. Its small size and lack of basic facilities such as public toilets explain why it is not considered a Visitor Centre. Comprising 3 floors and offices, an audiovisual room, a small interpretative exhibit on the NP and an information point. It is generally open in the summer season.
- **Ons Visitor Centre:** located in the Curro district, in the building that used to be the Civic Centre and also housed the schools, as noted by the desks still preserved inside. The interpretative exhibit is mainly based on the rich cultural and ethnographic heritage of Ons, linked to the values and natural resources of the archipelago. A media room and office complete this equipment. As on Cíes, the centre is open during the summer months.

Overnight stay areas

Free camping is forbidden in the National Park, so if you wish to stay overnight on the islands, it is essential to do so in the authorized areas on the Ons and Cíes archipelagos.

- **Camping on Cíes:** a private facility, authorized through a concession. It is located on the Isle of Faro, 800m from the Information Booth. It has a maximum capacity of 800 places and every visitor can stay up to 15 consecutive days, so it is advisable to book in advance, especially in summer. This is managed on the website, by phone or at the office site, located at the Vigo Ferry Terminal. The card or booking number will be essential to that the ferry company can issue notes return tickets on different days. The camping site is



Camping on Cíes

open throughout the period of regular transport, although it is advisable to confirm with the owner company.

- **Camping on Ons:** is located in the place where, until 2013, there was controlled camping on Ons, in the place known as Chan da Pólvora, about 800 meters from the pier. This private facility has been used for 2nd category camping.

Camps and work camps

For years, the Regional Government of Galicia has organized environmental volunteering and youth camps on the isles of Cíes and Ons. Fields of work are projects where groups of young people from different backgrounds, voluntarily and selflessly, get themselves involved in social projection, combined with other complementary activities. In the case of the National Park, volunteers carry out support tasks in different areas, such as public use, monitoring and environmental conservation. The Work Camp facilities are in Cíes, on the isle of Monteagudo. The youth camps are held on the Isle of Ons, at facilities owned by the Regional Government in the Pereiró district, southeast of the island. In recent years, volunteer projects are starting to be launched across the islands, so to welcome the participants, in-house administration facilities are available or



Facilities Pereiró youth camps on the Isle of Ons

they are organized with the collaboration of camping sites. Although the activities carried out in the camps are fundamentally playful, as with the rest of the educational projects carried out in the park, they are based on knowledge, respect and commitment to the conservation values of the countryside.

Lookouts

Although there are many places on the islands from which you can admire the landscape, only some of them are considered as such because of their enormous landscape interest, location and relatively easy access for most visitors. On Cíes, the areas adjacent to the Cíes Lighthouse, da Porta and Monteagudo, Pedra da Campá or Alto do Príncipe are the most significant. On the isle of Ons, the viewpoint known as Fedorentos affords a breath-taking view over the Isle of Onza, and the isles of Cíes and Costa da Vela, the nearest mainland archipelagos. The Buraco do Inferno (Hell's Hole) and Punta Centulo, an area with restricted access during the seabird breeding season, are other landmarks on the isle.

Onza and Cíes from the viewpoint of Fedorentos, south of the Isle of Ons

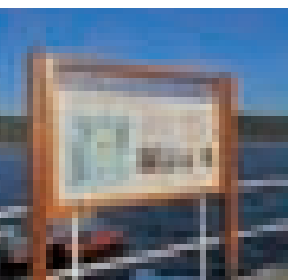


Observatories

In such structures, aimed at observing wildlife (seabirds here) with such a design approach that enables visitors to the breeding areas without disturbing or scaring away the animals, there are two examples in the Cíes Islands. One is located a few meters from the viewpoint of A Pedra da Campá and another near the Faro de Monteagudo, on the island of the same name. Inside are panels with information on key species that breed on the cliffs of the park.



Bird Observatory Isle of Faro



Informative panel about National Park in the pier of Carril, which provides access to the isle of Cortegada

Information boards and signposting

The National Park has information boards across the archipelago, located close to the piers giving access to the same. They include a specific map of the archipelago, with services, points of interest and itineraries, plus an overall map with the location of the National Park and some basic rules of the countryside. As far as signposting is concerned, this includes signs indicating the reserve areas, restricted areas or areas closed for reasons of management and direction signs for the main routes and points of interest, complemented by the distances to them and support posts on the tours. Furthermore, we can find panels in strategic locations with information on the natural and cultural values of the national park related to the enclave in point.

Basic services

Health care

So far, none of the islands has sanitary personnel on a permanent, but only in the months of July and August and at weekends in September is this service available in Cíes and Ons, as it coincides with the period of greatest influx of visitors. The Red Cross booth on Cíes is located a few meters from the information booth, near Rodas beach. It is attended by several lifewarden, a doctor or a Nursing Graduate and lifewarden that come with the first daily boat and leave with the last. On the isle of Ons, the post is at the start of the path leading up to the lighthouse in the Curro district. As on Cíes, day care has a Nursing Graduate and several lifewarden. The National Park has first aid kits and equipment, a boat and vehicles available for emergencies, backed by civil defence personnel in peak periods on the isles of Cíes.

Drinking water

One of the reasons that led people to settle, since time immemorial, across the archipelago was the presence of its own springs. But although the need for supplies in this case are covered, it is important to note that water is a scarce commodity, especially in the summer period and when there is a greater influx of visitors. On Cíes, Ons and Sálvora the water sources are marked, although they do not always have water and drinkability is not always guaranteed, so that it is vital to carry enough water when visiting either of the archipelagos.

Rest Areas

Taking advantage of the natural shelter provided by trees, several rest areas have been set up along some of the more frequented pathways, with the addition of tables or benches so that visitors can stop along the way to rest, eat or just sit and enjoy the landscape and the calm. On Cíes there are a couple of areas, one at the foot of O Lago dos Nenos (Children's Lake) and another next to Nosa Señora beach, as well as stone benches or tree trunks in strategic locations on the paths themselves. On the isle of Ons, they are found opposite the camping and along the beaches of Area dos Cans and Dornas.

Rest area next to Nosa Señora beach in Cíes



Public toilets

There are public toilets all over the archipelagos in the National Park, which have at least one adapted for the disabled. On Cíes they are located next to the path leading up to the Cíes lighthouse, about 900 m from the information booth; on the isle of Ons, inside the Visitor Centre, which means that they are not always available. On Sálvora, they are inside the Country Manor and on Cortegada they are next to the information booth; both remain open for group visits authorized by the National Park.

Other services

There are only catering establishments on the archipelagos of Cíes and Ons, with opening times varying depending on the archipelago and on the time of year, so that it is important to be informed if you intend to use such services.



Accessibility for people with special needs

The park is working to adapt its facilities and resources so that all people, regardless of their physical or sensory abilities, can enjoy their visit to the islands. In any case, it is advisable to first consult with the Park staff regarding the resources or services available, depending on the needs of each person or group.

Some of the adaptations regarding access for people with disabilities are:

- Wooden walkways with accesses to the beaches. On Sálvora, Cíes and Ons, these are wooden walkways that provide access to the closest beaches to the piers.
- Paths with a firm surface: on Cíes, the stretch between Rodas pier and the crossing with Nosa Señora beach, and from the information booth to the access to Figueiras beach. On the isles of Ons and Sálvora, the path leading up to the lighthouses. Also on Cíes, the



section from the crossing with Nosa Señora to Carracido pier, and on the isle of Ons, the stretch from Curro to the Pereiró area have ruts of cement, facilitating access for certain groups.

Access walkway to the Praia do Almacén on the isle of Sálvora

- The piers on Cíes, Sálvora and Cortegada have pontoons attached to the pier with access ramps. It is important to bear in mind that the variability of the slope due to the tides can hinder its use at certain times.
- Public toilets are adapted in Cíes.
- Lease of amphibious crutches. On Cíes and Ons, is possible to ask the park staff for amphibious crutches, allowing a better grip on the path than traditional crutches, ideal for moving around the sand and they are resistant to corrosion from seawater so that they can be immersed. In the summer it is also available for loan an amphibious beach chair in Cíes, a service provided in collaboration with the Red Cross.
- The visitor centre at the National Park and the Visitor Centre on the isles of Ons and Cíes are adapted, and the information point has a ramp for easy access.

VISIT TO THE ISLANDS

How to reach the Park: access points.

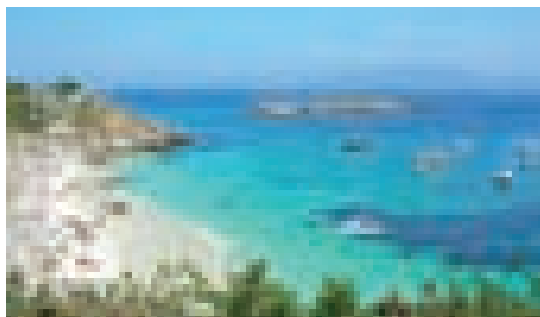
Visits to the islands are regulated in different ways. We can divide the park into two, depending on the way to access them: Cíes and Ons, on the one hand, and Sálvora and Cortegada, on the other. The information on authorized shipping lines for each year can be found on the website (www.parquenacionalillasatlanticas.com), in the offices or in the Visitor Centre of the National Park.

Visit to Cíes and Ons:

By private boat: you can visit any day of the year. The procedure for sailing and mooring in the waters of the National Park is as follows:

In accordance with the Declaration of the National Park, and within the framework of the objectives of conservation and public use of the protected area, it is necessary to have written authorization to navigate and to anchor private craft in the waters of the National Park. The above authorizations are granted to owners of vessels by a process that can be made through the website of the Park (www.parquenacionalillasatlanticas.com) OAPN's (Autonomous Authority for National Parks) website (<http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/red-parques-nacionales/nuestros-parques/islas-atlanticas/>) or at its offices. Authorization to navigate, a requirement to obtain mooring, is on a two-yearly basis, and is automatically renewed, whereas mooring is granted for a period of days depending on the time of year and can be processed directly in the mooring management programme on the National Park website. Permits must be carried on board the vessel during the visit.

In order to make the visit compatible with nature conservation, vessels must meet a number of conditions included in the authorization, such as respect the

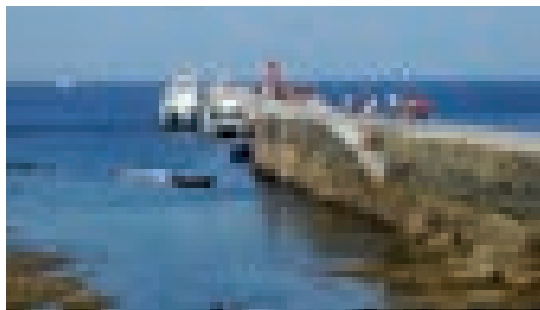


Boats moored off Nosa Señora beach in Cíes

authorized mooring areas in each archipelago, not cross the areas marked out with buoys reserved for swimmers, manage waste properly, not exceed the speed limit and respect seabirds and cetaceans.

Waterbikes require authorization for navigation and mooring; kayaks, canoes and other floating artefacts listed in RD 1435/2010 of 5th November, are only allowed to navigate.

Using regular public transport: there is regular public transport during certain periods of the year: Holy Week, weekends in May and in the summer season. For reasons of conservation and the quality of visits, the maximum number of daily visitors in these periods to Cíes is limited to 2000 people, plus 200 spaces for organized groups for learning purposes.



Visitors landing at the pier on the isle of Ons

Organized Group, arranged with the ferry company:

the ferry company contacted by the group needs a specific National Park permit for this type of service. The conditions for issuing this permit include the presentation of an educational project, asserting visits and accompanying guides with accredited knowledge of the National Park, with a ratio of 25 people per guide.

The maximum number of visitors authorized out of season, arriving on regular transport, is restricted to **350 people per day** on the isles of Cíes and Ons for reasons of conservation and the quality of the visit that an NP should aspire to provide.

Visit Sálvora and Cortegada:

- **By private boat:** the same conditions as for Cíes and Ons.
- **By public transport:** there is no regular public transport.
- **Organized Group, arranged with the ferry company:** the ferry company requires an arranged National Park permit for the service, in order to manage the maximum number of daily visitors of **125 people a day**, established for such visits in each archipelago. The procedures are the same as those described for Cíes and Ons.
- **Granting non-scheduled trips:** on the initiative of the ferry company itself and with the mandatory NP permit, the ferry company can offer tickets to individual tourists to visit the islands on certain days following prior application to the NP, while meeting the requirements in terms of quotas and the ratios of visitors per guide. These are known as **charter** trips, usually offered in the summer season from O Grove and Ribeira to go to and from Sálvora and from Carril to Cortegada.

Activities: what to do on the islands

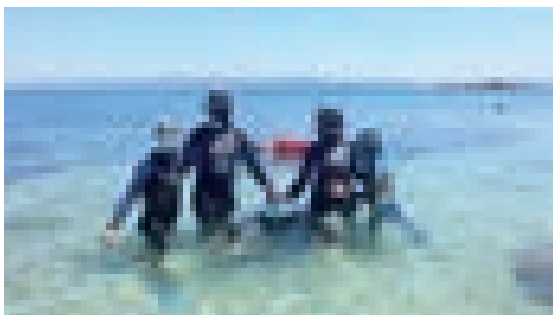
Go for a trip ... by sea: scuba diving & kayaking

Diving in the waters of the National Park is a highly recommended activity as it allows you to discover the richness of its seabed. In legal declaration of the Park, to practice this activity it is necessary to have the relevant authorization. Information on the procedure involved can be obtained on the Park's website or at the offices.

Authorization is required for diving sport with both scuba and free diving, although in the latter case only if diving with weights, because if otherwise, it is considered as surface snorkelling and so does not require a permit. But however, it is always interesting to visit the information booth where you can find information on the most suitable areas for diving.

This authorization includes a series of conditions to make the activity compatible with the conservation of the seabed, such as the ban on angling or underwater fishing, collecting natural elements, moving the seabed or disturbing wildlife.

Over the past few years, some exciting initiatives are being launched that allow visitors to get close to the marine environment, such as the offering of snorkelling and kayaking guided activities in the archipelagos of Cíes and Ons during the summer months.

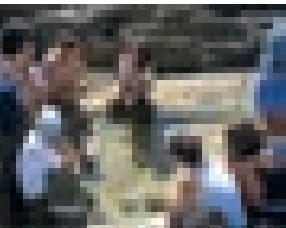


Take a walk... on land: Itineraries

Without doubt, the best way to get to know the National Park is by walking down any of the paths for public use. Only through direct contact with the space can you appreciate its true value, and for this reason, this part of the Atlantic Ocean was declared a National Park, which in turn will give the keys to understanding the protective measures that affect it and one's own capacity to take part in its conservation.

There are several options when following these paths, depending on the time available to the visitor, the degree of knowledge of the protected area or the type of visit involved. For people who find it difficult to go on any of these routes, there is the possibility to at least get detailed information on any particular aspect of the space, by requesting documentation at the booths and information centre or by visiting exhibitions or seeing the scale models on display in the course of your visit. Furthermore, it is now possible to follow some of these routes virtually on the Web page, so that as many people as possible, regardless of their proximity to the space or physical limitations, can become acquainted with the National Park.

Guided routes: among other activities, both on Cíes and Ons, the Public Use team at the National Park has designed different guided tours available to the general public throughout the period in which the ferry companies operate, normally during Holy Week, July, August and September. The main objective is to show visitors, *in situ*, in a fun and meaningful way, the most outstanding features of the route, chosen according to the theme of the itinerary. Currently being developed in both archipelagos interpretative routes, with general contents, seeking to highlight the core values of the Park, as well as in the more specific aspects of the natural and cultural heritage. Free of charge, all that is needed to take part is to put one's name down at the information booths on the islands, where different routes, timetables and the ma-



Participants on the guided tour "Between tides".

ximum number of participants will be posted each day, in order to offer a quality activity.

This type of activity is also available for collective participants in environmental education and outreach programmes, as well as those who have previously applied at the National Park offices. They often take place out of the summer season, an important piece of information if you are interested in organizing this type of visit to the islands.

Signposted and self-guided itineraries:

another way to discover and enjoy the values of the National Park is by taking a tour of the islands following the signposted path network that any visitor can take on his/her own, abiding

by minimum security measures, such as by getting information, before starting the walk, on the status and characteristics of the chosen path and by following the recommendations described in a later section. Some of these routes include supporting material such as panels or leaflets that help us interpret the landscape that we see. All the paths that are currently operational on the islands of Cíes and Ons, which also appear in the specific brochures, as well as possible itineraries on Sálvora and Cortegada, are explained below which, although they have no public transport, afford the possibility for visitors to appreciate their natural and cultural heritage.



*Interpretative Panel
on the self-guided route
around Sálvora*

Cíes archipelago



There are currently 4 signposted paths, located between the isles of Faro and Monteagudo, since the isle of San Martiño has no facilities for Public Use. Due to the physical characteristics of the land and the existing zoning, all tours are of linear type, aspect to take into account in planning the visit. Everyone starts at the information booth of the National Park, where we can answer questions or get more specifics on them. Below is a brief description of each, along with the most important technical data and any variants or combinations allowed.

■ 1.- Monte Faro route

- Distance: 3.5km.
- Duration of the route: 1 hour 30 minutes (outward bound).
- Maximum-Slope: 175m.
- Signalling colour: yellow.
- Main points of interest: Rodas beach and dunes, the lake, Information Centre, Pedra da Campá, birdwatching, Cíes lighthouse.
- Description of the route: the following route is the most emblematic and popular of all made on the archipelago, ending at the highest point that you can visit out of the entire National Park, where one of the most spectacular views can be seen. In turn, it is also the longest, steepest and most exposed route to weather factors, which are important aspects to bear in mind before starting the route.

From the information booth, we take the cement path south that starts by heading south, to the left of the same, and we continue as far as the main crossing with the isle of Faro (25-30 minutes), leading into the clearly signposted forest path that goes up. In these first meters, we enjoy the spectacular Rodas beach, whose almost one and a half kilometres length joins the isles of Monteagudo and Faro, sho-

wing the dynamic action of the winds and currents in the peculiar formation of this barrier beach.



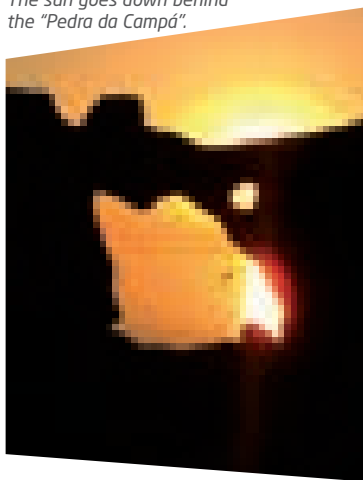
View of the spectacular complex beach-barrier-lagoon of Rodas from the path

Shortly after, we reach the “Lagoa dos nenos” (Children’s Lake), one of the areas of greatest interest and fragility in the National Park. Surrounded by a dam wall, an artificial structure built in the late 19th century to facilitate communication between the two islands, necessary after the installation of several salting factories and a seafood beds. The dam, with a natural breakwater, faces the beating Atlantic Ocean and regulates the seawater coming into the lake. The shallow, calm, warmer water in the lake makes it an ideal refuge and breeding place for many species, which we can see if the water is clear enough. White bream, mullet, bream, gilthead bream, sea bass and wrasse are some of the most common species, as well as octopus, eels and crabs, if we have a little patience and a stroke of luck. Once on the island of Faro, we arrive at the campsite entrance, the only place where visitors can stay overnight on the island, which we leave to our left, continuing along the main footpath. We will also pass by the public toilets, which has an accessible toilet. In 6-7 minutes, we come to the most sheltered and humanized area on the island, where we find the information centre, most of the facilities and park staff quarters, besides a few privately owned houses, occu-

pied only in the summer. 300m after going past the centre is the main crossings on this island, where we take the path that goes to our right. At the first curve, can enjoy the views of the isle of Saint Martin and Nosa Señora beach, one of the most beautiful on the archipelago, below our feet. Halfway up, where trees can no longer grow and give way to gorse and brushwood, we can have a brief stop and approach the Pedra da Campá, a peculiar rock pierced by the erosive force of the Atlantic's salt-laden winds and go up to the bird observatory, from where we can see the breeding sites of yellow-legged gull and shag, two of the most representative species of seabirds in the National Park. The height and location of the site will allow us also to enjoy some excellent views over the lake and Rodas beach, noting the tremendous difference between the east side of the islands, with its much smoother profile and the west face, marked by the force of the ocean.

Back on the main path, we continue uphill, after a series of final bends at the top of the hill, until we reach the lighthouse. From there, surrounded by seagulls playing with the wind and 175 meters steep cliffs at our feet, we can contemplate the whole of the Cíes archipelago which, like a giant dike, protects the Ria from Vigo from the onslaught of the powerful Atlantic Ocean.

The sun goes down behind the "Pedra da Campá".





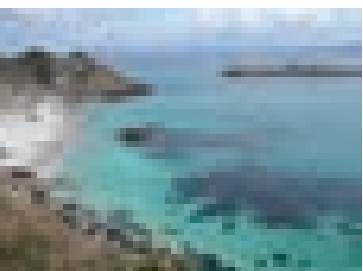
The protection that the islands gives the ria is evident in the steep cliffs on the west face.

■ 2.- Faro da Porta route

- Distance: 2.6Km
- Duration of the route: 1 hour (outward bound).
- Maximum Elevation: 55m.
- Signposting-Colour: Green.
- Main points of interest: Beach and dunes in Rodas, The Lake, Information Centre, Nosa Señora beach, Faro da Porta.
- Description of the route: this route starts from the same place as the previous route, sharing the first part of the way. Once at the main crossing on the isle of Faro, we continue along the rutted path, leaving warm, sheltered Nosa Señora beach, Punta das Vellas and Viños islet on our left, a favourite spot for shags to dry their feathers in the sun. Here we can get a beautiful view from a bend in the path, about 100 m from the crossing. About 45 minutes into the walk, we come to Carracido Pier, now used as a service pier, but originally built to give access to the lighthouses.

From here the path ascends slightly bordering the south coast of the island, until reaching the small Faro da Porta lighthouse, 53m above sea level, located at the northern end of the so-called Freu da Porta. The 500m of this narrow channel and its strong currents separate the rest of the archipelago from the isle of Saint Martin, the wildest of the three. Set on the rocks at the foot of the lighthouse, the Porta da Furna shows us the result of the tireless work of the sea in the form of dark, deep caves, the ideal place of shelter for shag hatchlings. Sea pink, sea fennel, angelica ... are just some examples of the characteristic plants to be found around the lighthouse. We can also enjoy

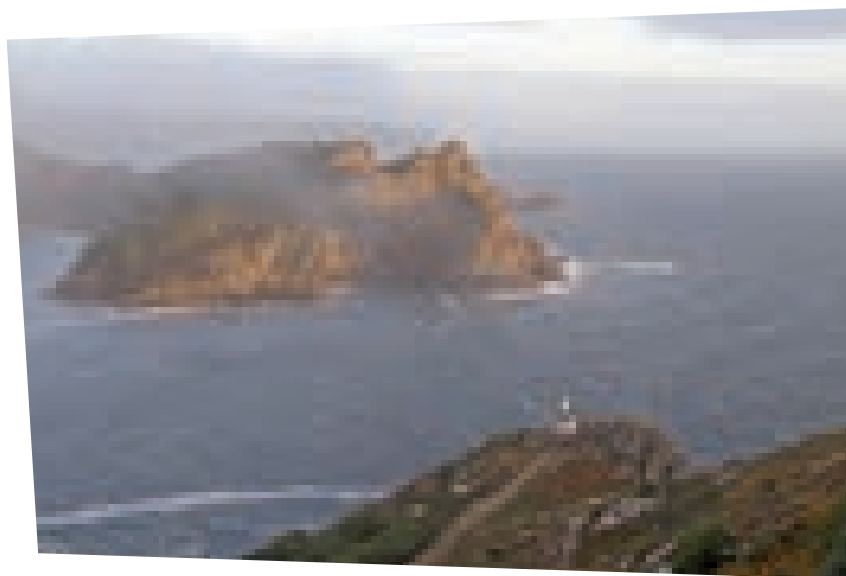
Nosa Señora beach and Viños islet



an excellent view over the South Island, highlighting here being the Punta and Furna da Galeira, an impressive cliff crowned by a stone cross set up in memory of the 26 fishermen who perished in the Moana wreck of the "Ave do Mar", in 1956.

Finally, if we look to the side of Monte Faro, among the vegetation, we will see the remains of the prehistoric settlement known as Castro das Hortas an ancient Iron Age settlement that is the most important archaeological site found to date in the Cíes Isles.

If you wish, you can combine the two itineraries explained above by following a path that joins them together and is marked both on the maps and on the land, allowing for a practically circular trip.



Da Porta lighthouse, the watchtower of the called "Freu da Porta", a narrow channel separating San Martiño from the isle of Faro

■ 3.- Alto do Principe Route

- Distance: 1.7Km
- Duration of the route: 45 minutes (outward bound).
- Maximum slope: 122m.
- Signposting colour: Blue.
- Main points of interest: Figueiras-Muxieiro dune complex, Figueiras Beach, the Queen's Seat.
- Description of the route: once at the information booth, we take the path that leads out to the right and begins gently ascending the east of the North Island or the isle of Monteagudo. The dune complex of Figueiras-Muxieiro, on our right, is the first item of interest on this route. This is an important dune system, both for its length and its conservation status. From the first mobile dune fronts to the more stable, there is an excellent representation of animal and plant species specifically adapted to the harsh conditions of this environmental habitat. Such species include marine thyme (*Helichrysum picardii* var. *virescens*), camarina (*Corema album*), typical of transdunal scrub, or the extremely rare sea thrift (*Armeria pungens*), this being the northernmost location for this species, with no observed presence until as far away as the southern Portuguese coast.

Detail of the fruits of camarina, one of the botanical jewels of the National Park



This first stretch takes us up to the access path leading into Figueiras beach, with a nudist tradition, where we can enjoy a splendid panoramic view of the nearby Costa da Vela. Returning to the forest path, we continue walking up to the crossing with the isle of Monteagudo, some 20 minutes from our starting point. The area colonized by acacias and eucalyptus, planted in the '50s, dominates this part of the island, and the result of more recent reforestation with native tree species and others characteristic of some of the valley and Atlantic se-

aboard areas, such as alder, laurel, willow or oak trees.

From this spot, facing the river and under a front line of eucalyptus trees, we can see a small oak grove (*Quercus pyrenaica*), the last stronghold of the native woody vegetation of Cíes and the object of a specific recovery programme. The landscape begins to change as we go up the path that leads into the left side of the crossing; the trees begin to lose ground to scrub vegetation, due to the lack of protection from the strong Atlantic winds loaded with salt and to the increasingly scarce land. Now heading south, the path continues until, after a short descent, it opens up to reveal part of the spectacular scenery that we can enjoy in a few minutes. These final 100 m of ascent follow a path through the rocks shaped by the wind and water, to reach the Queen's Seat, a whimsical rock formation carved by tremendous erosive action, offering one of the most beautiful viewpoints on the islands.

In addition to the vision of Cíes Lighthouse, impressive cliff 175m on their feet, their situation can observe the contrast between the two sides of the more rugged islands on the west side, given their continuous exposure to the ravages of the Atlantic Ocean. The beach of Rodas, the tranquility of the sea in its secluded bay, lake or the lush vegetation of the tree this side, compared to the nearly bare and steep slopes west, give us an idea of the natural protection offered by islands the Ria of Vigo.



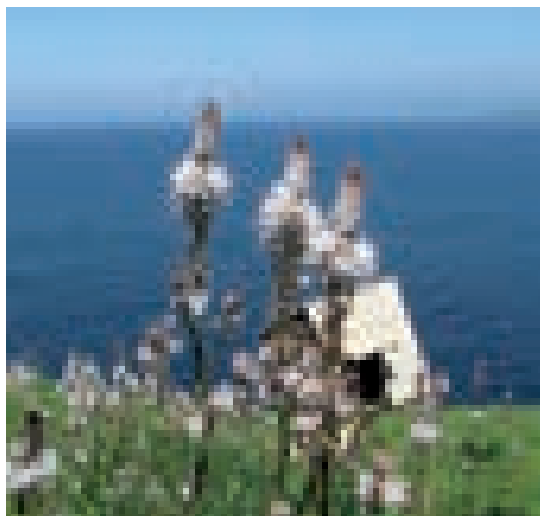
The spectacular "Queen's Seat" profiled between the horizon and the deep blue Atlantic Ocean

■ 4.- Monteagudo Route

- Distance: 2.5km
- Duration of the route: 1 hour (outward bound).
- Maximum Elevation: 60m.
- Signposting colour: Red.
- Main points of interest: Figueiras-Muxieiro dune complex, Figueiras Beach, bird observatory, Faro do Peito or Monteagudo, Furna de Monteagudo.
- Description of the route: the route, which coincides with the first part of Alto del Príncipe route, starts at the information booth, where we take the path leading from the right of it. Once at the main crossing on the island, we follow the path continuing north, leaving another reforestation areas of common oak and Pyrenean oak, with its first few meters, to our left. At about 400m from the crossing, the eucalyptus and acacias begin to lose ground as we approach Chancelos trough. The flag shaped trees at one end of the eucalyptus grove and the few pine trees scattered over the small hill are the result of the action of strong ocean winds, sculpted asymmetrically, "combing", taking on this curious appearance, which gives us an idea of the harsh living conditions imposed by the environment.

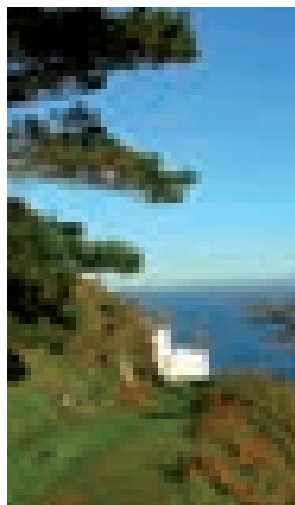
Also here is the incinerator, a small building where, years ago all waste generated in the islands was incinerated. Continuing along the path we gradually approach the foot of Alto de Monteagudo, which characteristically gives name to this island and it is not possible to walk up as it lies within the reserve zone. At the fork, we take the path on the left, and through a small wooded area, we find the ruins of an ancient insular settlement, leading us to the bird observatory.

From this vantage point we can observe, without interfering, the hundreds of cormorants and gulls that flock on these steep slopes in the breeding season, filling



Monteaugudo Bird Observatory "hanging" on the cliffs of Monteaugudo.

them with a relentless, bustling activity. Even from here we can see the lighthouse a few meters away, we need to walk back a little and down a path on the left that leads to it. The silhouette of Costa da Vela, just 2.5 km away, makes this the closest point to the mainland where, since 1904, the small automated lighthouse guides ships entering the Ria of Vigo. To the north, we can make out the isles of Ons and Onza, sheltering the Ria of Pontevedra. If we follow the stone pathway leading from the lighthouse, we come to a small representation of large sea caves on the west side that are the result of the constant beating of the waves and the peculiar structure of granite, which makes it fracture vertically. Returning to the fork at the foot of Monteaugudo along the path that runs along the coast, at various points it lets us enjoy the view on the south, over Cantareira coast, Muxieiro head and even the coast of Baiona. Once there, we only have to retrace our steps to the Information Booth, where we will return to after a pleasant two-hour walk.



The small Monteaugudo lighthouse, guarding the northern entrance of the Ria of Vigo.

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*

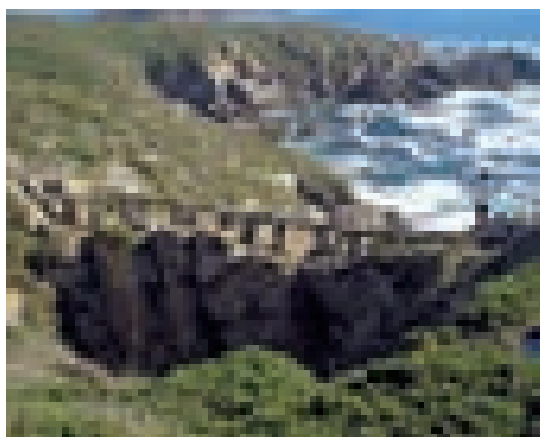


- Description of the route: after leaving the National Park information booth behind, we climb up the short but steep slope that crosses the small Curro settlement, to the crossing where all the main paths and paths meet, a few meters from the church. We take the cement path ruts bearing south which, 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

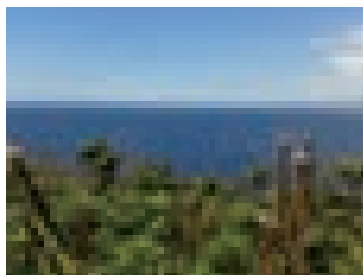
- Distance: 8.1km
- Duration of the route: 3 hours (circular route).
- Maximum Elevation: 100m.
- Signposting colour: Blue.
- Main points of interest: Curro settlement, Melide beach, Punta Centolo, Punta Xubenco, Ons lighthouse, Punta Liñeiros, Caniveliñas Cove.
- Description of the route: as on the 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-

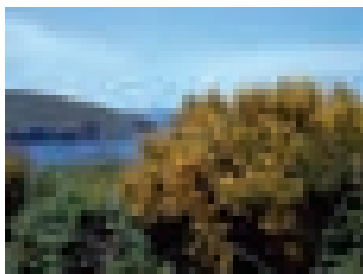
tes to reach Punta Centolo viewpoint, a spectacular balcony that allows us to enjoy one of the most beautiful, overall views of the coast: Sálvora, with the coast of Sierra Ribeira and the irregular Sierra de Barbanza behind, O Grove peninsula, A Lanzada, the Ria of Pontevedra, Aldan, Costa da Vela ... 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.

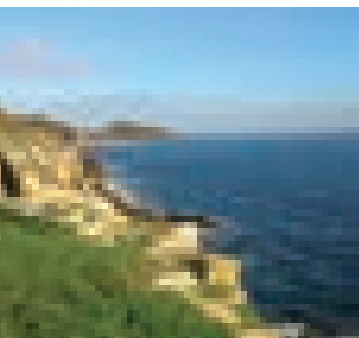
We follow the path that leads to the west that runs along the coast. We head south (left), following the path down through the dense thicket of gorse, heather and brushwood, they start to lose ground against the harsh conditions imposed by the ocean. Caniveliñas Cove, which gradually fills our field 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 lantern appears, 128 metres above sea level. The path, which now runs through a corridor of thorn, black-thorn 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.

Sálvora archipelago



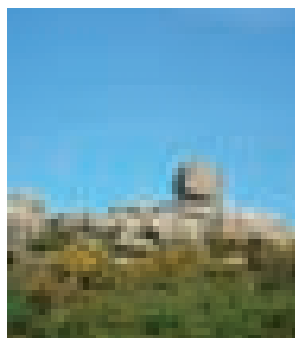
*Beach and Pazo do Almacén,
our welcome to Sálvora.*

Sálvora Island has two marked routes, one with free access and the other that can only be followed by the guides authorized by the National Park, for reasons of safety and conservation.

■ 1. Lighthouse Route (free access).

- Distance: 1.2km
- Duration: 30 minutes (outward bound).
- Maximum Elevation: 24m.
- Signposting colour: Red.
- Main points of interest: Almacén beach, Sálvora's Mermaid, Pazo de Sálvora (country mansion), Lighthouse.

- Description of the route: once at the pier, poster in the National Park shows us, apart from the most important aspects of the regulations, a map of the archipelago, showing the route; on the other side of the path, a panel explains the contents of the self-guided route, which by means of interpretative tables located at strategic points along the way, enables us to discover many of the secrets of this spectacular enclave. A few meters after starting our walk, we come across the wooden walkway that leads to the “Praia do Almacén”, a unique stretch of sand that can be accessed, as the rest are located in reserve areas.

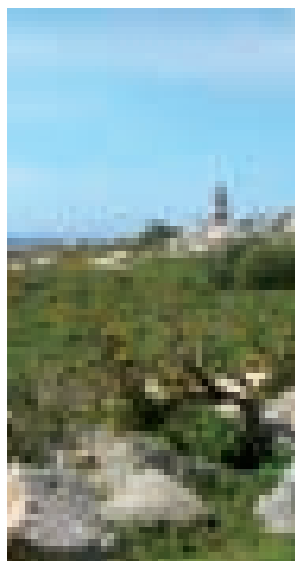


*Sálvora,
an island of sculptures.*

We will later be welcomed by Sálvora’s Mermaid, a sculpture that one of the owners of the island had erected to perpetuate the memory of its noble past. Behind her is the Pazo de Goyanes country mansion, built on a former warehouse for curing and salting fish, and a small chapel, which used to be the tavern where the fishermen got together. We will access the same through a gateway that protects the fragile, valuable dune ecosystem. An ancient cannon, as well as some of the pylons where the fish were deposited in brine and can still be seen inside the country mansion, take us back to bygone days.

Now on the main path, the whims of huge balls of granite can be seen, showing us how harsh life was on the islands, marked by the wind, sand, rain and salt.

Walking around the foot of Mount Gralleiros, with views of Ons to the south even of Cíes on clear days, we come to today’s lighthouse on Sálvora, where the lighthouse keepers still work so that the boats, thanks to the warning sent out by its light, as it has been doing since 1921, the year in which the shipwreck of the steamer Santa Isabel marked the beginning of its career, can safely put into port.



*As it does for seamen,
Sálvora’s lighthouse guides
our way.*

■ 2. Route Village (access with an authorized guide)

- Distance: 1.7Km
- Duration of the route: 40 minutes (outward bound).
- Maximum Elevation: 20m.
- Signposting colour: Blue.
- Main points of interest: Praia do Almacén, Sálvora country mansion and the Mermaid, Village.
- Description of the route: From the pier, we will share the previous route until reaching a fork to the right of the main path, about 400m from the start of the tour. The path climbs gently, allowing us to contemplate the Ria of Arousa from a spectacular new viewpoint, with the imposing rocky islet of Noro in the foreground, followed by Herbosa, Gaivoteira and Vionta, with one of the botanical jewels of the National Park, broom, *Cytisus insularis*.

Halfway along the path, a group of willows indicates that we have reached the Santa Catalina fountain, formerly known as the “Fonte da Telleira” and the most important of the island, which we will see on our left. Just before reaching the village, we can see the old washing place, now an ideal place for breeding and re-



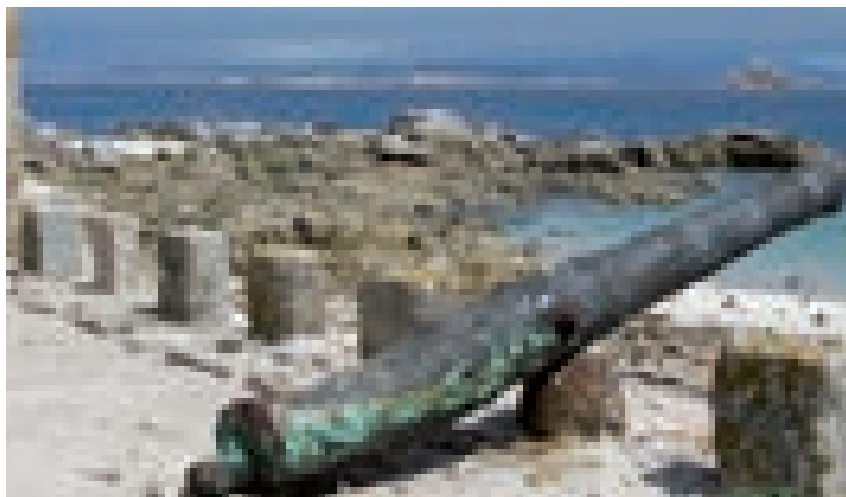
The village of Sálvora, located in a privileged spot.

aring the Iberian newt population on the island. The village, now in a precarious state of preservation, was home to a population of about 60 people, being finally abandoned in the late 70's.

The path continues going around the village, allowing us to wander between the stone granaries where crops are kept that its inhabitants have recently restored. We rejoin the path by which we reached the village, after passing under a canopy of laurels and blackthorn, to go back to the pier in about 30 minutes.



*Stone granaries,
Sálvora pantries.*



*Sálvora and its islets,
sentinels protecting
the Ria of Arousa.*

Cortegada archipelago



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

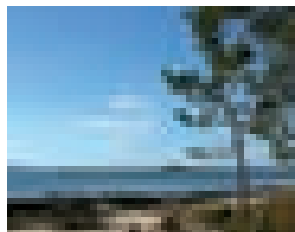
A prospectus supplemented with some clearly marked posts will help us to go on this walk to discover some of the isle's treasures. These brochures can be requested from the wardens, the arranged ferry service or can be found at the information points in the National Park.

■ 1. Circular route on the isle of Cortegada.

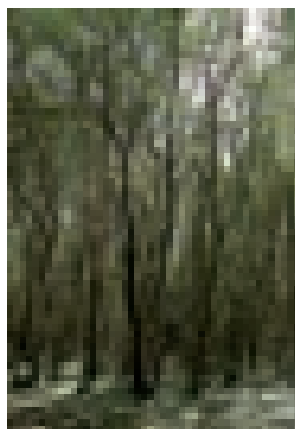
■ Option A

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

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



Malveiras from the west coast of Cortegada

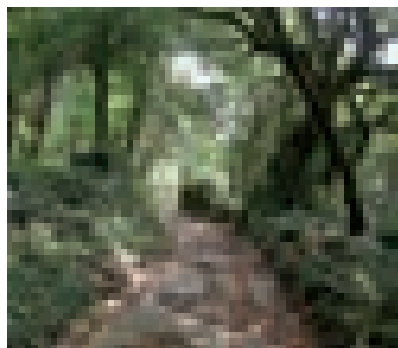
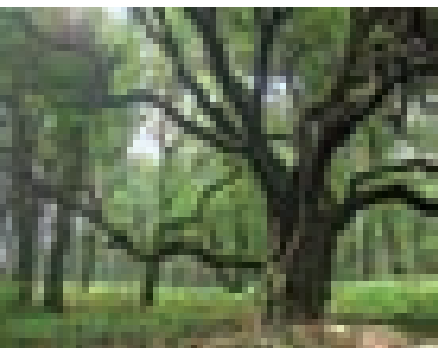


Laurel grove on Cortegada

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

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

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

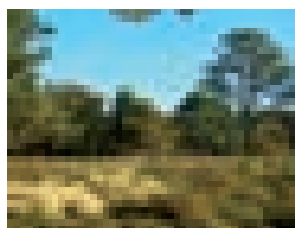


Arrival at the village following the “Camiño do Carro”

■ Option B

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

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



The prairie, a surprise on Cortegada



The old village taken over by vegetation

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





*Information booth
on Cíes.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE VISIT

The insular nature of our National Park makes it particularly important to be informed before visiting any of the islands. Clearing up any queries about the regulations, availability of transport, hospitality, health care, accessibility, guided tours or any other issues will help for a safe, quality visit, in line with our expectations.

This information can be obtained at the Park offices or at the Visitor Centre, which will also help us to discover the natural and cultural values of the protected area. We can also find out on the different websites and social networks, which thanks to their dynamic nature, allow us to access both the general contents, activities and the latest news about the National Park.

In general, in addition to the above, the following recommendations should be taken into account:

- It is important to make sure what exactly the timetables are, embarkation points and transport services provided by the ferry companies, as they may vary depending on the time of year or weather conditions. Also note that there are quotas for daily visitors, which may condition the visit during the summer months.
- For reasons of conservation and landscape, there are NO bins on the islands: each visitor should take any waste back to the port of origin. Remember that cigarette butts are also waste.
- If you are going to use authorized camping areas, note that there is a limited number of places available.
- It is highly recommended to stop at the information points on the islands in the Park to learn about the possible activities available and any other aspect of the visit. These information points are attended by specialized personnel.
- Prolonged exposure to the sun can cause dehydration and skin burns: make sure to drink plenty of liquids and do not forget items such as sunglasses, cap and sunscreen.

- Wear sports shoes and comfortable clothing; do not forget a raincoat or a jacket for the boat trip and in case of changes in temperature.
- It is advisable to bring a camera, video and/or binoculars, but bear in mind that filming or photography for commercial purposes requires prior permission from the National Park.
- A photograph or a good experience are the best souvenir. Shells, flowers, sand and other natural elements have their function in nature; please do NOT take them away.
- Learn about the National Park and its natural and cultural values on a tour with specialized interpreter guides. These routes, which have a maximum number of participants per route, start from the information booths on the islands, where you need to sign up.
- For conservation reasons, keep to the paths intended for public use.
- Your safety is our concern, but it is your responsibility. Do not perform hazardous activities, such as getting too close to the cliff edge or swimming when the sea is not calm.
- Avoid causing annoying noise, and in this way you will respect wildlife and visitors seeking to enjoy the sounds of nature.
- Avoid crowds and large groups when hiking or any other activity in the park.
- Respect the rules and follow the instructions of the guides, rangers, wardens and environmental agents.
- Participation and communication are basic management tools. Actively to conserve this natural area, warning of any possible shortcomings or suggesting improvements through the complaints/suggestions system.

REGULATIONS

In order to conserve the National Park and make different uses of the same compatible with the protection of natural and cultural values, there are regulations to be met, including mainly the following laws: Law 15/2002 declaring the Maritime Terrestrial National Park of the Atlantic Islands of Galicia; Decree 274/99, by which the Plan for Natural Resources of the Atlantic Islands of Galicia is approved; Decree 88/2002, amending the Plan for Natural Resources Natural Area of Cortegada Isle and its surroundings is approved; Law 42/2007 of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity; Law 9/2001, conservation of nature in Galicia and Law 30/2014 National Parks Network. The Master Plan for the Use and Management of the National Park, currently under development; this will further detail the regulations applicable in the protected area.

Regarding this legislation, it is important to note that it is not allowed:

- To light any type of fire, campfire or similar.
- To camp outside the areas intended for that purpose.
- Throw or deposit any of rubbish or solid or liquid waste. For reasons of conservation and landscape on the islands, there are NO bins, so that each visitor must take their waste back to the port of origin.
- Accessing areas marked as being not accessible to the public.
- Disturb, injure, capture or kill wildlife.
- Perform any activity that may destroy, damage or disrupt the unique natural features of the area.
- Dig up, cut or damage vegetation.

- The collection, destruction or alteration of items of archaeological, historical or geological interest, both on land and sea (it is important to stress that it is not allowed to collect shells from the beaches and the sea bottom).
- Practice diving without prior permission.
- Practice spearfishing and fishing.
- Stay or pass through with landing nets, guns, spears, underwater spear guns or any other similar devices.
- Moor and berth vessels and navigation, unless expressly authorized.
- Install banners or advertisements without permission.
- Use public address systems, sounds or noise that may alter the natural peace and calm.
- Land pets (except guide dogs).
- Film or photography for commercial purposes without prior permission.
- Land motor vehicles (except wheelchairs).
- Introduce animal and/or non-native plants.

