National Park office: Edificio Cambón, C/ Oliva 3, 2, 36202 Vigo.
Telephone: +34 886 218 090 / Fax +34 886 218 094
Visitors center: Edificio Cambón, C/Palma 4, 36203 Vigo.
Telephone: +34 886 218 082
e-mail: iatlanticas@xunta.gal www.parquenacionalillasatlanticas.com
https://es-es.facebook.com/ParqueNacionalIslasAtlanticasDeGalicia

Ed. 2018. 100% recycled paper

XUNTA DE GALICIA
CONSELLERÍA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE, TERRITORIO E INFRAESTRUTURAS

UNIÓN EUROPEA
FONDO EUROPEO DE DESENVOLVEMENTO REXIONAL
"Unha maneira de facer Europa"

PARQUE NACIONAL MARÍTIMO TERRESTRE DAS ILLAS ATLÁNTICAS DE GALICIA

THE ISLAND NAMES

Self-guided tour round the Island of Ons

Circular route
6,2 km – 2 h 30 min
Gradient: 86 metres
Difficulty level: Medium

PARQUE NACIONAL MARÍTIMO TERRESTRE
DAS ILLAS ATLÁNTICAS
DE GALICIA

Every year, thousands of people visit this island, so each individual action is multiplied by thousands. That is why it is so important that you take this regulation into account.

There are no refuse containers on the islands. We would ask visitors to please take their waste back to the port of origin.

Cigarette butts are particularly difficult to collect from beaches and paths. Please put them out and take them back with you.

In order to prevent forest fires, the lighting of fires is prohibited.

Pulling up plants or picking flowers is prohibited as it has an adverse effect on plant development and reduces the food resources of insects and birds.

Drones, kites or any other flying gadgets are forbidden without the National Parkís express permission.

Bringing animals onto the islands is prohibited (with the exception of guide dogs) as they interfere with the autochthonous species: hunting of birds and mammals, pulling up plant roots in the dunes, etc.

Making noise which interferes with the natural tranquillity of the islands, disturbs other visitors and the fauna is prohibited.

Collecting shells from the beaches is prohibited as it reduces the amount of nutrients available to the plants in the dunes.

The fauna must not be disturbed. The birds and fish should not be fed as this can lead to disease and a change in their feeding habits. Pulling shells from the rocks, i.e. mussels, limpets, is prohibited.

Walking outside the main paths leads to plants being stepped on and, by opening secondary path, increases the risk of erosion.

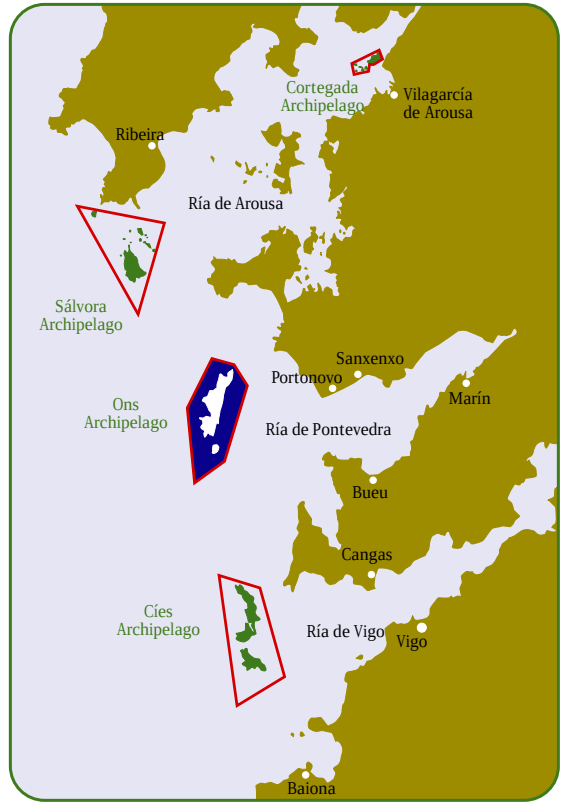
Some areas are nature reserves to which access is prohibited, the cliffs or the dunes for example, as they are host to important seabird breeding grounds or have a delicate vegetation, etc.

Texts: Public Use Staff National Park
Photography: National Park Archive, except Photography Algae Forest (stop 5): J.L. González - CENEAM
Graphic design: Celia de los Arcos
Illustrations: Fernando Ruibal

Law 15/2002, Decree 274/99, law 42/2007.

The archipelago of Ons, along with the archipelagos of Cíes, Sálvora and Cortegada, forms part of the Galician Atlantic Islands Maritime-Terrestrial National Park, which protects one of the best examples of Atlantic coastal ecosystems.

In this space, 86% of the protected area corresponds to the marine area surrounding all of the archipelagos, where rocky or sandy seabeds and algae forests connect their biodiversity to terrestrial ecosystems associated with the sea, such as cliffs, dunes or coastal scrub.



The National Park, through its signposted paths and guided or self-guided tours, invites visitors to discover its values, from the formidable cliffs to the seabeds, through the coastal scrub, the dunes, wooded areas or algae forests, without forgetting its cultural heritage—a result of human presence on these islands.

The self-guided tour "The island names" covers the southern half of Ons and brings us closer, through its place names, to its natural and cultural wealth.

The place names of Ons reveal the deep relationship between its inhabitants and the surrounding natural environment.

The isolation of Ons' inhabitants, especially in winter due to rough sea conditions, led to them becoming more and more dependent on the environment in which they lived, and this was the inspiration behind the myriad of place names, many of which have survived until the present day.

Springs, streams, mountains, islets, headlands ... Galicia has a wide variety of geographical features, a universe that had to be stored in the collective and individual memory in order to facilitate such important everyday tasks as getting food or fresh water. Giving names to these places meant they could be located safely and accurately.

By analysing the place names of the island, we can glean information about the history and customs of its inhabitants, but also about species that flourish in particular areas, about geology or about the richness of its marine environment.

Our suggested route crosses the southern half of the Island of Ons, stopping in some places where, through place names, we will discover different aspects of the natural processes and activities of the inhabitants of this island.

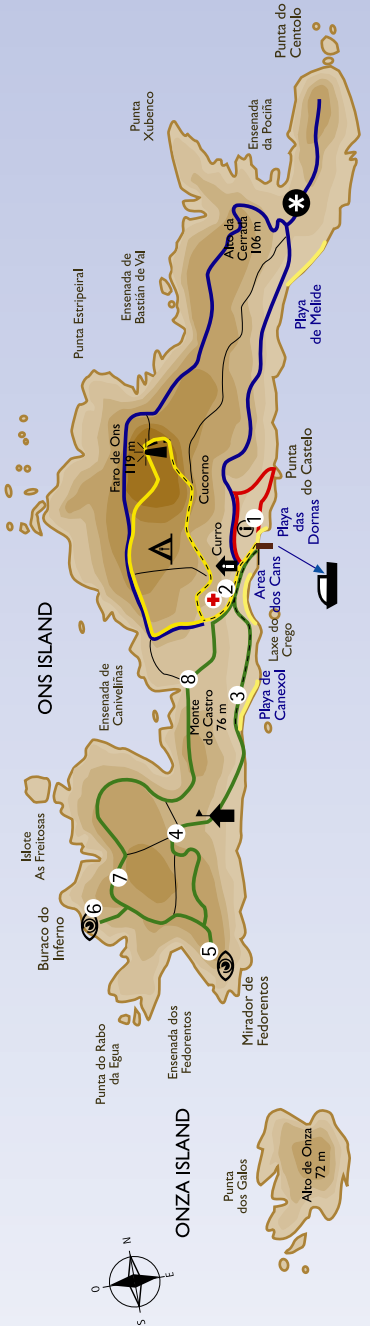
The tour "The island names" follows the southern route, marked in green on the map. Wooden poles with a green stripe and an arrow will show you the way to go. Those with numbers indicate the corresponding stop.

ROUTE MAP SYMBOLS

- South route
- North route
- Faro route
- Castelo route
- Union between routes
- Other accesses

Information · Camping · Vantage point · Access is not permitted between 15/03 to 15/08 · Youth campsite · Red cross · Dock · Information point

1 Stop 1: Praia das Dornas
2 Stop 2: O Curro
3 Stop 3: Praia de Canexol
4 Stop 4: O Alto
5 Stop 5: Enseada de Fedorentos
6 Stop 6: Burato do Inferno
7 Stop 7: Illotes As Freitosas
8 Stop 8: Enseada de Caniveliñas e Punta das Xestas



STOP ① : PRAIA DAS DORNAS

To survive on these islands located between the ria and the ocean, boats capable of navigating difficult waters are needed: dornas (traditional Galician fishing boats).

What means of transport have you used to get here? Maritime transport was, and still is, almost the only way to communicate with the mainland.

This beach next to the dock is named after the most common traditional boat on the island: the dorna. Whether by rowing or sailing, the families on the island found their main source of sustenance in the waters surrounding the archipelago.

The dorna's shape is suited to navigating in these barely sheltered waters, far from the calm waters within the ria. In the event of a storm, thanks to its size it can be dragged up onto the beach to be safeguarded from the sea.

On the information board at the beginning of the climb, to the left of the information hut, you can see what this beach was like in the 60s, when several hundred people lived on the island.

It was precisely the decline in the use of the dorna, in favour of larger motor boats that needed a marina to dock in, that was one of the triggers behind the emigration of most of the inhabitants to the mainland.

STOP ② : O CURRO

This neighbourhood was built by the state in the 1960s to modernise and improve the living conditions of the island's population.

On the eastern side of Ons, more than 90 houses can be found— a legacy from the mid-twentieth century, when 500 people lived here. Just like in cities, houses are grouped into neighbourhoods.

The buildings found on the coast you have just come up were built in the 60s by the National Institute of Colonisation, to provide infrastructure to this community that had always lacked basic services such as health care.

That is why schools, churches; houses for teachers, the priest and the doctor (whose house was never used); and a communal silo and an enclosure for livestock were built here. Maybe there was already a livestock enclosure on this part of the island (*) in the past, so this place, and by extension the whole neighbourhood, was given the name that these structures have in Galicia: O Curro (livestock enclosure).

Nowadays, the year-round resident population on the island is less than 10 people.

(*) Cabeza Quiles, F. (2018). Revista Aunios nº 23.

STOP ③ : CASTRO DOS MOUROS

Prehistoric communities had already learnt to live in close relationship with the sea.

On the jagged hill that can be seen to the right of the path, remains of a Bronze Age hill fort can be found, giving rise to local legends.

You can see the outline of the hill fort and its defensive structures from the path, although currently there is no access to it, nor is it an excavation site. This is the oldest recorded settlement on Ons.

The existence of hill forts in the islands reflects how the prehistoric communities had already learnt to live in close relationship with the sea, sailing its waters and finding their food there.

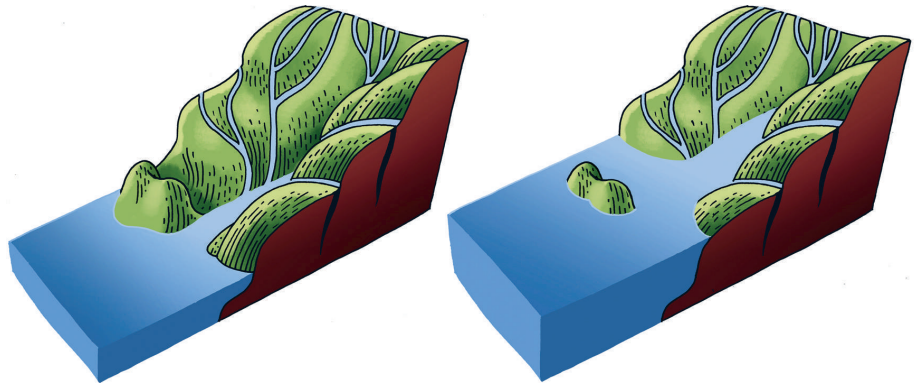
This hill has been given the name of "Castro dos Mouros" (Hillfort of the Moors), and , like other places in Galicia that add "dos Mouros" ("of the Moors") or "da Moura" ("Enchanted Moura") to the name, it is associated with a legend. In this case, the legend is of an underground tunnel connecting it to the rocky islet that can be seen opposite, near the beach of Canexol, which is where people would have hidden when they were under siege by pirates or enemies.

STOP ④ : O ALTO

The formation of the rias also gave rise to this gently sloping island.

Do you know that you are on the outer face of the mountains that make up Salnés, the peninsula between the rias of Pontevedra and Arousa?

Thousands of years ago, what is today the island of Ons was a mountain on the coast. It became isolated as a result of the sinking of the coast due to slow movements in the earth's crust and, above all, to the rise in sea level after the last ice age. Thus, 6000 years ago, the coastal valleys were flooded forming the rias, the coastal mountain ranges were transformed into peninsulas between the rias, and their outermost mountains, into islands.



Despite the gentle relief that Ons appears to have when viewed from the ria, the maximum level reaches 119 metres at the lighthouse, and there are other hills that are around 100 metres high, like this one you are climbing, which is precisely called O Alto (The High Point).

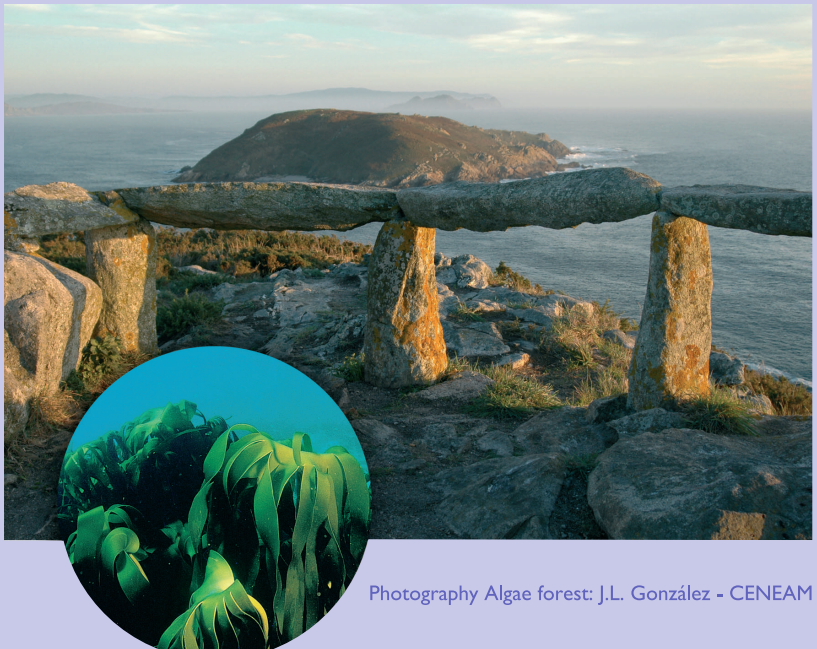
STOP (5) : ENSEADA DE FEDORENTOS

Marine life gives this inlet its peculiar aroma and also its name.

You are at the Fedorentos Viewpoint. Of course, the name, meaning "stench", is hardly inviting, but why do you think it's called that?

The waters surrounding the islands of the National Park are among the richest, in terms of marine life, in the world. A part of all the living things that grow in the marine ecosystems during the spring and summer, when the conditions are more favourable, is later ripped out by the storms in autumn and winter. The location of the Fedorentos inlet, exposed to the open sea and the southerly winds, in addition to its form, leads to huge amounts of algae and other organisms being dumped on its beaches by the waves and currents. The foul odour emanating from this build-up is the reason behind the place name of this location.

For a similar reason, the small beach seen from here on the island of Onza is called Praia das Moscas, in honour of the flies associated with decomposing organic matter.



Photography Algae forest: J.L. González - CENEAM

STOP (6) : BURATO DO INFERNO

The entrance to hell was the home for sea birds.

The name Burato do Inferno (Hell's Hole) gives us a clue about the legends associated with the place, but also about the fauna and geology of the islands.

The erosion caused by the sea and the wind formed a granite cave (furna) and ended up causing the collapse of its roof, leaving behind this great hole that, with a depth of 40 metres, connects with the cave's entrance in the sea. This formation was given its name due to the belief that it was an entrance to Hell, through which the screams of tormented souls could be heard.

The reality is that the cries come from the marine birds that nest inside the furna. The islands' cliffs are home to thousands of marine birds, and in the past, it used to be the nesting ground for guillemots, a bird which is currently extinct in the Iberian Peninsula. It was precisely the guillemots who, with their cries from deep inside the furna, gave the island its infernal name.

STOP ⑦ : ILLOTES AS FREITOSAS

The ocean created this rocky landscape where only those who adapt to it can survive.

The cracks in the rocks of the As Freitosas islets and in the rest of the cliffs of the islands provide homes for animals and plants capable of living in this inhospitable landscape.

The name Freitosas possibly has a Roman origin and is a reference to the cracked rock that forms the cliffs and the islets you can see before you (from the Latin verb *frangere*, "break", the islets were given the name *fractosas*, "broken", and this evolved into the present day Freitosas).

All of the west face of the islands looks out onto the open ocean. The salt-laden winds and waves gradually erode away at the coast, especially in the weakest areas formed by the vertical fractures, which are very common in granite rocks of these cliffs. This is how this landscape of rocks battered and fractured by the sea is formed—a place where plants like the sea pink and birds like the European shag make their homes.

*Origin of the place name As Freitosas taken from Cabeza Quiles, F. (2007), Revista Aunios No 12.

Animals and plants must adapt to survive in these cliffs in which it's the very ocean that establishes the living conditions. When observing the vegetation on the cliffs, it can be noted how the closer plants are to the sea, the lower they grow on the ground, adopting round forms that aid in their struggle against the strong winds.

Yellow-legged gulls—the most numerous marine bird in the National Park—build their nests among the vegetation. The most vertical sides of the cliffs, far from the prying eyes of people, are the ideal nesting site for the European shags, excellent divers who find their food in these abundant waters and who you may even see resting on the lower rocks near the sea or skimming the water.

STOP ⑧ : ENSEADA DE CANIVELIÑAS AND PUNTA DAS XESTAS

The broom (xestas) bushes of Ons are part of the universe that the inhabitants of Ons identified in their place names.

Sometimes, the names of places in the islands refer to something really obvious, for example, a certain species found in abundance in the area. In the Punta das Xestas, one of the National Park's botanical treasures can be found.

This inlet you are in now is called Caniveliñas, due to the canes that grow next to water sources. In turn, the headland that limits the narrowest part on the right is called Punta das Xestas, due to the abundance of broom bushes (in Galician, xestas).

The broom bushes that can be found on the cliffs of Ons form the largest colony of a species endemic to the Atlantic Islands and nearby coasts, *Cytisus insularis*, commonly called "xesta de Ons". If you look around, you might see some examples of this unique species that possibly evolved due to effects of insularity. Maybe because it's a characteristic species of its landscape or because it's used against the evil eye, the broom bushes already form part, through place names, of the cultural heritage of this island.

From here you can go back to the starting point of the tour, following the signposts with the green strip until you get back to O Curro.

We hope you have enjoyed this tour and that it has helped you discover some of the values the Galician Atlantic Islands Maritime-Terrestrial National Park hide within, both in the islands and their surrounding waters and the people living there.

We would like to invite you to discover a little more about the National Park through the signposted routes that are marked in the leaflets or participating in some of the guided tours. Ask at one of the information points at O Curro.