

# CASTRO

*... moves you*



AYUNTAMIENTO DE  
CASTRO URDIALES

HISTORY AND HERITAGE





CASTRO URDIALES

## *a town open to the sea* **A TOWN OPEN TO THE SEA**

Castro Urdiales connects eastern Cantabria to the western Basque Country and forms a narrow strip of land parallel to the sea and the mountains in an aesthetic contrast that shapes an evocative landscape. It is a town with a personality of its own that stands out on the horizon of the Cantabrian Sea, the impetus of which has chiselled a spectacular line of cliffs that shelters the fishing port and beaches of soft sand. Two thousand years of history have created this seafaring showcase with an outstanding landscape, heritage, traditions, and gastronomy and a lively social and cultural life. It also boasts an extensive calendar of festivities throughout the year.

The most representative image of this town open to the sea is that of the proud Gothic church of Santa María. In the vicinity of the latter the following stand out: the Castle-Lighthouse, the medieval bridge, the ruins of the Romanesque church of San Pedro, and perched on a crag the Chapel of Santa Ana.

## **SEAFARING HEART** *seafaring heart*

The seafaring heart of the old town can be explored on foot and is to be found in the port area, La Correría that surrounds the Town Hall, and the old quarter which has inherited its medieval framework. It is in Calle San Juan where the oldest 16th-century houses survive; they can be identified by the stone arches of their entrances. Don't forget to look out over the breakwater and stroll along the bay without losing sight of the Cantabrian Sea as far as the Parque de Amestoy.

Natural resources have determined the historical appeal of Castro Urdiales. The iron deposits of Otañes and Mioño led the Romans to establish the settlement of Flavióbriga, the stony essence of which still remains beneath the modern town. Its traces can be visited at the site located in the old quarter. At Otañes the remains of the Roman road that

linked the coast to Pisoraca (Herrera de Pisuerga) can still be seen, together with a pair of milliaría that marked the way and are now on view in two public places: the Plaza de Otañes and inside the Castle-Lighthouse.

In the Middle Ages the town became one of the most important whaling ports of the Bay of Biscay. It was also a place of passage for the pilgrims travelling along the northern route towards Santiago de Compostela. Today with over thirty thousand registered inhabitants it benefits from the economic influence of the Basque Country and has consolidated itself as a privileged destination for both leisure and tourism.



### The architectural heritage

Castro Urdiales has inherited a noteworthy architectural heritage mainly thanks to the architects from the town Eladio Laredo and Leonardo Rucabado: the Palace and Castle of Ocharan, the Casa de los Chelines, the Bristol and Salvarrey Buildings, and the Chalet San Martín. The catalogue of relevant buildings, some of which have been recovered for public use such as the former abattoir that it is now the Centro Musical Ángel García Basoco, also includes the Casa de la Naturaleza, the bullring, the municipal market, and the Pedro Velarde Mansion which is now the Centro Cultural La Residencia.

The funeral architecture of the Cemetery of La Ballena is of special interest with its catalogue of modernist, neo-Gothic, and *art nouveau* pantheons.





## HISTORY AND HERITAGE

### Church of Santa María

The symbol of Castro Urdiales is the imposing Church of Santa María, the most important Gothic church of Cantabria, which was declared a Site of Cultural Interest in 1931. It was built between the 12th and 14th centuries and has a basilica ground plan and three naves. Its situation on a hill overlooking the Cantabrian Sea makes its colossal structure truly majestic; it shows French Gothic influences and similarities with Burgos Cathedral. In its interior a Gothic polychrome stone image of Santa María la Blanca can be seen.

The church shares its vantage point with the medieval Castle which is pentagonal in shape and one of the few surviving fortresses in Cantabria. The lighthouse that was built within the Castle is more recent; its lamp was lit for the first time in 1831. The ensemble is completed by the medieval bridge or old bridge with a single pointed arch which affords access to the islet of the Chapel of Santa Ana.



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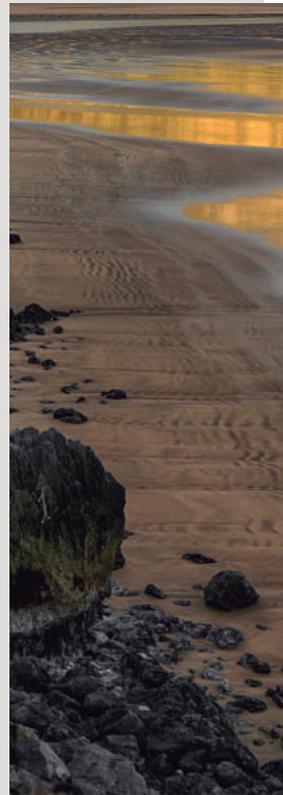
## NATURE

### Port and beaches

The bay not only determines the landscape but also economic, social, and cultural customs. Everything revolves around the sea, from the fish (the raw material for the local canning industry) and the auctioning of its various species and those of shellfish at the market to the enthusiasm for rowing races or gastronomy, which is associated with Cantabrian Sea products such as anchovies and bonito. Our recommendations for exploring this link with the sea are to practice fishing as a sport, sailing, or canoeing, to stroll on the quays and the sailors' quarter, to go on a boat trip, or to visit the Sea and Fishing Museum (Museo del Mar y de la Pesca). Watch how fishing craft are repaired on the San Guillén Ramp or the unloading of fish at the port, and enjoy dusk at the breakwater.

The beaches with their golden sand and crystal-clear water are an essential attraction. Choose from that of the Bra-zomar urban area which is 400 metres long and sheltered from the bay; the solarium located on the Don Luis Quay, a breakwater without sand; and El Pedregal, an outstanding natural swimming pool that at high tide fills with the water that comes up through a tunnel below the cliffs.

On the other side of the vantage point lies the beach of Ostende on a shell-shaped tongue of land almost a kilometre in length. Dícido, Oriñón, Sonabia, Islares, Cérdigo, and Ontón are other nearby beaches, some of which are ideal for water sports such as surfing or windsurfing.





## NATURE

# *natural beauty*

## NATURAL BEAUTY

The mountainous landscape is the perfect setting for hiking and climbing. The peak of Cerredo has spectacular beech woods of tall trees. Candina is one of the most valuable natural landscapes of Cantabria and provides nesting sites for griffon vultures, the only ones in Europe on sea cliffs. The Peña Helguera woodland crosses a brook that flows into a huge cave, La Cubilla. The ridge of Anguía and Ventoso, the natural border with Vizcaya, forms the highest mountain in the municipality. Routes in this area include numerous burial mounds, dolmens, and menhirs.

The municipality also has an extensive network of caves for potholing and attractive areas such as the Pocillo de los Frailes, a small rocky cove between the cliffs to enjoy the sea and sun almost in solitude.



CASTRO URDIALES



## *new experiences*

### **NEW EXPERIENCES**

The map of Castro Urdiales is criss-crossed by greenways for hiking and cycling. Five routes (Dícido, Setares, Piquillo, Alén, and Traslaviña) provide a total of 45 kilometres that follow the old railway tracks and mine trails. The trail of the many former mines of the municipality (Mina Josefa, Mina de Cotolino, and Mina San Blas) represents an added attraction to enjoy landscapes, tunnels, and cavities in contact with nature.

The Ruta del Chorrillo explores a Roman aqueduct (a Site of Cultural Interest) 500 metres long that extends from the mineral fountain, which captured water from several springs, to near the port. Another possibility is to follow some sections of the pilgrim route of the Camino de Santiago that run through the municipality (of between two and eleven kilometres).

Another series of routes starting from Castro Urdiales allow visitors to explore the vicinity on foot or by mountain bike as far as the remains of the old Templar castle or Monte Cueto. It is possible to return by descending the Roman road of La Loma or the road to the Chapel which affords an impressive panoramic view of the town and its bay. A circular route of just six kilometres that starts and finishes at the same point can also be followed between the Alto de la Helguera and the old mining village of Setares, which is now in ruins.

A number of cycle touring routes starting from and ending in the town cater for cycling enthusiasts.



GASTRONOMY



## A RIOT OF TASTE

The streets of the historic town centre (La Correría, Ardigales, La Rúa, and La Mar, among others) contain a wide range of restaurants and tapas bars. This is an area for visitors to explore and steep themselves in the local gastronomy which is based on fish and shellfish. The products that the Cantabrian Sea affords such as anchovies, bonito, hake, or baby squid appear on all menus together with grilled sardines in the summer and anchovies in batter or in vinegar (boquerones). Local recipes also feature vegetables and local dairy produce.

Most of the festivals of the town are linked to gastronomic traditions that still survive here. The Day of San Andrés (30th November) is celebrated by eating snails and sea bream. On 15th August, the Day of La Asunción who is the patron on the town, a bonito cooking pot competition is organised in which thousands of people take part. On the Day of San Martín it is traditional to eat kid, on that of Santa Ana there is an omelette competition, and the shortest night of the year (San Juan) is celebrated with a sardine festival.



## CEMETERY OF LA BALLENA

# *art in silence* **ART IN SILENCE**

The 19th-century cemetery of La Ballena with its eclectic style is one of the most outstanding in Spain and has been a Site of Cultural Interest since 1994. It is located near the sea on a small peninsula on the road to Allendelagua beyond the urban area.

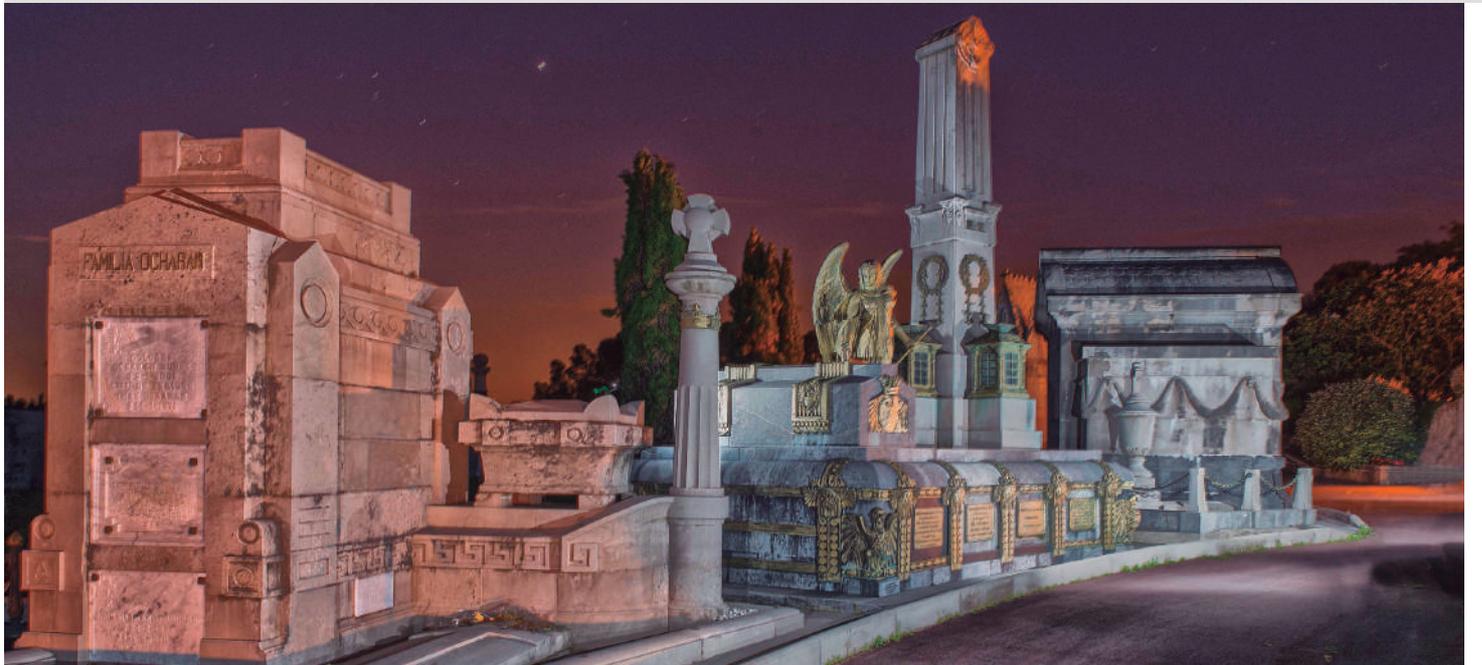
The solitude, the Cantabrian landscape, and the silence give this architectural heritage cemetery a special atmosphere.

The ground plan of the cemetery, which was inaugurated in 1883, is neo-classical in its inspiration and is laid out in wide parallel avenues that descend towards the sea. It was designed by Joaquín Rucoba and Octavio de Toledo and built by the architect Alfredo de la Escalera, and is of great importance from a planning perspective.

The green areas are alternated with mausoleums, mounds, and highly decorative neo-Gothic, modernist, and neo-classical pantheons dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These were designed by the Castro Urdi-

ales architects Leonardo Rucabado and Eladio Laredo as commissions from the bourgeois families of the time such as Ocharan, Helguera, Artiñano, Cortejanera, and Isidra del Cerro.

These funeral monuments were located on the most privileged sites. The pantheon of the Del Sel family stands out with its impressive bronze angel and four hooded falcons.





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