

*Green*  
**SPAIN**

**THE**

*Spirit* **OF THE**  
*North*

**FOOD**  
*and*  
**TRAVEL**  
MAGAZINE

  
greenspain  
the spirit of the north

**SPAIN**  
IS PART OF YOU

  
2017



## Food and Travel

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# Welcome

The first thing that struck me while editing this guide is how rare it is to discover a destination that so deeply evokes the spirit of the good life. With so much of it to yet be discovered, travelling across northern Spain reveals unspoilt splendour at every turn. It's a world custom-built for epicureans, where traditions are as old as time and the scenery is magnificent. We've traversed the four regions encompassing Green Spain to lift the lid on this invigorating land.

Ruled by the Atlantic, we dip our toes in Galicia's glassy waters, pluck *percebes* from craggy rocks and devour its bounty in *empanadas* (p16). Inland takes us to Asturias and cider country via the snow-capped Picos de Europa to feast on hearty stews and warming desserts (p20). We unwrap artisan cheese in Cantabria's rolling hills, before chowing down on local anchovies in charming fishing towns (p24). Then there's a constellation of Michelin stars and pintxos aplenty on offer in the Basque Country, where we forage for mushrooms and try our hand at the signature *txakoli* high pour (p28). We've also compiled a handy list of the best places to pick up produce (p48) and explored the principal cities for weekend breaks (p40). And the crowning glory? A look at the area's handsome palaces to uncover the secrets of Green Spain's nobel connections (p8), and drops of the finest bins from Rías Baixas to the Bay of Biscay, fiery Cantabrian liqueur and spritzy ciders whose serving is theatre in itself (p32). Grab a glass and join us. With so much on offer, I'm certain these pages will inspire your next trip. ¡Salud!

**Blossom Green** Editor



# Green SPAIN



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Pounded by Atlantic breakers and nourished by moisture from misty mountains, the evocatively named 'Green Spain' extends its embrace over the Iberian Peninsula's entire northern coast. This atmospheric expanse is perhaps one of the country's best-kept secrets – an area of staggering natural beauty, on-the-pulse cities, passionate artisan producers and sterling ingredients that give rise to gastronomic glory, from tapas bars to Michelin stars. Its diverse terrain sends shivers of delight down the spines of nature lovers, hikers and surfers alike; a rich art scene and beguiling history keep young and old entertained year round. While each of the four regions that comprise Green Spain – Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country – has a distinct personality, common factors mark them out as members of the same proud family. Blue blood binds the regions; unravel the family tree in a romp across the resplendent palaces that decorate the land. Nurtured by the area's microclimate, viticulture runs through the very veins of Galicians and Basques, while the mere mention of *orujo* (pomace brandy) is enough to set Cantabrians' mouths watering. Punchy cider poured from on high in Asturias is the fun-loving cousin in the clan. Whether you're a food lover, an oenophile, a culture vulture or an active traveller, the Green Spain family has something for you. Book a trip there now, before everybody else does.

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Meet the producers as you fill your basket with succulent shellfish, tangy cheeses and all manner of fresh ingredients at the many food markets and festivals that show off Green Spain's finest



Atlantic Ocean



## GETTING THERE

### GALICIA

**easyJet** has flights from London Gatwick to Santiago de Compostela. [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)

**Ryanair** runs services from Stansted to Santiago and Edinburgh to Vigo. [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com)

**Vueling** flies from Heathrow to A Coruña and Gatwick to Santiago. [vueling.com](http://vueling.com)

# TRAVELinfo

Green Spain comprises four distinct autonomous regions along the northern Atlantic coast: Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque Country. Currency is the euro and time is one hour ahead of GMT in the summer, two hours ahead during winter. Direct flying time is less than two hours.

## Bay of Biscay



### ASTURIAS

**easyJet** has three flights per week from Stansted to Asturias. [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)  
**Iberia Express** flies three times a week from London Heathrow. [iberiaexpress.com](http://iberiaexpress.com)  
**Vueling** has thrice-weekly flights from Gatwick to Asturias. [vueling.com](http://vueling.com)

### CANTABRIA

**Brittany Ferries** sails from Plymouth and Portsmouth to Santander. [brittanyferries.com](http://brittanyferries.com)  
**Iberia** flies daily from London Gatwick to Santander with one stop in Madrid. [iberia.com](http://iberia.com)  
**Ryanair** has regular flights to Santander from Edinburgh and London Stansted. [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com)

### BASQUE COUNTRY

**BA** flies daily from London Heathrow to Bilbao. [ba.com](http://ba.com)  
**Brittany Ferries** sails three times a week from Portsmouth to Bilbao. [brittanyferries.com](http://brittanyferries.com)  
**easyJet** offers regular flights from Stansted to Bilbao. [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)  
**Vueling** flies from London Gatwick to Bilbao every day. [vueling.com](http://vueling.com)

# Galicia



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: CASTELO DE SOUTOMAIOR DATES FROM THE 12TH CENTURY; SAMPLE AN ALBARIÑO AT QUINTEIRO DA CRUZ

## CROWNING *glory*

Green Spain's royal and noble connections are its hallmark. From summer villas and regal stonping grounds transformed into cultural hubs, to bodegas and hotels fit for a king – palaces reign supreme. We take you on a grand tour to discover the best

Criss-crossing Spain's northern coast are palaces that appear in a whole range of incarnations. In Galicia, Green Spain's most westerly region, you'll find them in clusters, united by the Route of the Camellia. These imposing buildings – known locally as *pazos*, and many of which double as wineries – are characterised by their botanical gardens. Once occupied by nobles, they stand out amid the simple rural landscape as symbols of a feudal social order that

had its heyday in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Some of the most striking examples are found near Pontevedra and the Rías Baixas. This area combines dramatic coastlines and medieval towns not far from Santiago de Compostela.

Pazo de Rubianes is one of the finest. The vast estate was founded by Duke García Caamaño in 1411, and wears its 600-year history proudly. Stately interiors have been kept in pristine condition and its 1598 chapel holds pieces of art from the era.

Wander amid the formal gardens – home to over 450 varieties of camellia – or explore the vineyards before sampling an albariño from the original cellar alongside a 'palace lunch' of local cheeses and charcuterie.

Nestled in the nearby Valley of Salnés, neoclassical manor house Quinteiro da Cruz does a similarly fine line in albariño. Its gardens are a romantic combination of shady bowers and stone fountains flanked by greenery. You'll also find two *hórreos* – grain stores

BELOW, FROM LEFT: PAZO DE OCA; PAZO DE RUBIANES; PAZO DE LA SALETA



# PA



ABOVE: THE 600-YEAR-OLD PAZO DE RUBIANES BOASTS BEAUTIFULLY PRESERVED INTERIORS AND IMPRESSIVE FORMAL GARDENS



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: THE CHAPEL AT PAZO DE LA SALETA; THE IMPRESSIVE PAZO DE FEFIÑANES; PAZO DE SANTA CRUZ DE RIVADULLA

Photos by Turismo de Galicia; Fran Nieto; Luis Carré; Pérez Ferro; Carlos Zacande

typical of the region.

A Baroque palace *par excellence*, Pazo de Fefiñanes, near the coast at Cambados, has a distinctive shape that takes in a grand main square and church. Interiors exude the warmth of tradition, labyrinthine gardens are scented by rose trees, and fruit orchards meet the rolling vineyards. For a true Galician coastal experience, stay at the Parador de Cambados.

Referred to as Galicia's Versailles, Pazo de Oca is an evocative manor house

that's been lovingly restored to its 18th-century glory. Its interior gardens are among some of the most beautiful in Spain, whether wearing spring's blossom or a shroud of melancholic Atlantic mist.

A touch of the English country garden is found at Pazo de La Saleta. Camellias were brought here from England and planted amid the old vines. There are more camellias to be seen at the hilltop Castelo de Soutomaio, where they play bedfellow to orange trees, palms and eucalyptus

beyond the castle walls.

Follow the route to Pazo de Santa Cruz de Rivadulla where you'll find an award-winning boulevard of olive trees that once sectioned off the estate. The granite mill used to extract their oil can still be seen.

Bed down at Parador de Santo Estevo in the Ribeira Sacra, it's both exceptional and fairly priced. You'll find it hidden in the forest on the banks of the Sil River. The vibe is monastic cloister-meets-Oxbridge college in gorgeous surroundings.

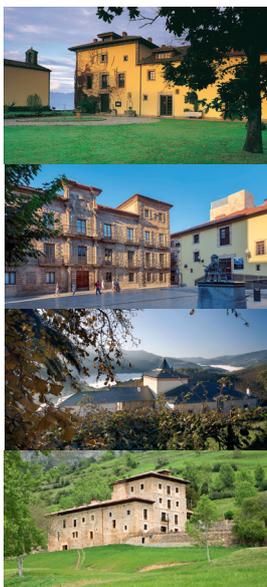
# LACES



Beautiful and beguiling, Asturias brims with history. From 9th-century castles to the San Salvador Cathedral, which houses the Shroud of Oviedo, Asturias are rightly proud of their heritage. Indeed, the people are a resistant lot. The long, turbulent history of Asturias has left indelible marks on both civil and religious architecture. These structures now provide places to visit and stay that train a lens on the past and many buildings have been listed as Unesco World Heritage sites.

Palacio de Revillagigedo in Gijón displays some of the finest baroque architecture in Asturias. Built on a medieval fortification, it was completed in the 18th century. Today, it's home to an international art centre. Team a visit with a trip to Sidrería La Galana, a short walk away, to try some of the region's best cider.

In a similar vein to English



FROM TOP: PALACIO DE CUTRE; PALACIO DE CAMPOSAGRADO IN AVILÉS; FINE VIEWS FROM PALACIO DE PRELO IN BOAL; PALACIO DE RUBIANES AND ITS GREEN GROUNDS

country house hotels, many of Asturias' palaces and mansions have been converted into top-end hotels. While funding their architectural integrity, they also give visitors a chance to sample Spanish regal life. Parador de Cangas de Onís, on the banks of the Sella and enveloped by the mighty Picos de Europa, is a perfect example. With 64 bedrooms at under £80 per night, it makes a great base.

Palacio de Prelo in Boal has equally stunning views of Navia Historical Park and offers comfortable rooms. Incorporating the modern amenities travellers insist on, Puebloastur in Cofiño and

PA



FROM FAR LEFT: GIJÓN'S ICONIC PALACIO DE REVILLAGIGEDO; PARADOR DE CANGAS DE ONÍS; LUXURY AT PUEBLOASTUR



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: PALACIO DE FERRERA'S GARDENS; CASTILLO DEL BOSQUE LA ZOREDA; HOTEL PALACETE DE PEÑALBA

Photos by Asturias Tourist Board; Noé Borrada; Jesus Algora; Juan Feliz; Amoud Spont

Palacete de Peñalba have excellent facilities in historic surrounds. Puebloastur has Turkish baths and advanced treatment rooms, while modernist marvel Peñalba has a gothic heritage and boasts a superb restaurant serving excellent cuisine with a Slow Food ethos.

Art and architecture converge in Oviedo, where Palacio de Velarde houses the Museo de Bellas Artes. Its collection of Spanish art is superb and includes El Greco's *The Apostle*.

Near the capital, Castillo del Bosque La Zoreda is five star in every respect. Set in the forest of Zoreda, it opened in 2009 and is

considered one of Spain's top 25 hotels. Rooms are huge, rates are reasonable and it caters for Spain's high society. Further into the Picos de Europa, the 16th-century Palacio de Rubianes is set at the foot of Monte Sueve and also boasts a golf course. Nearby restaurant Veredales serves fine local cuisine.

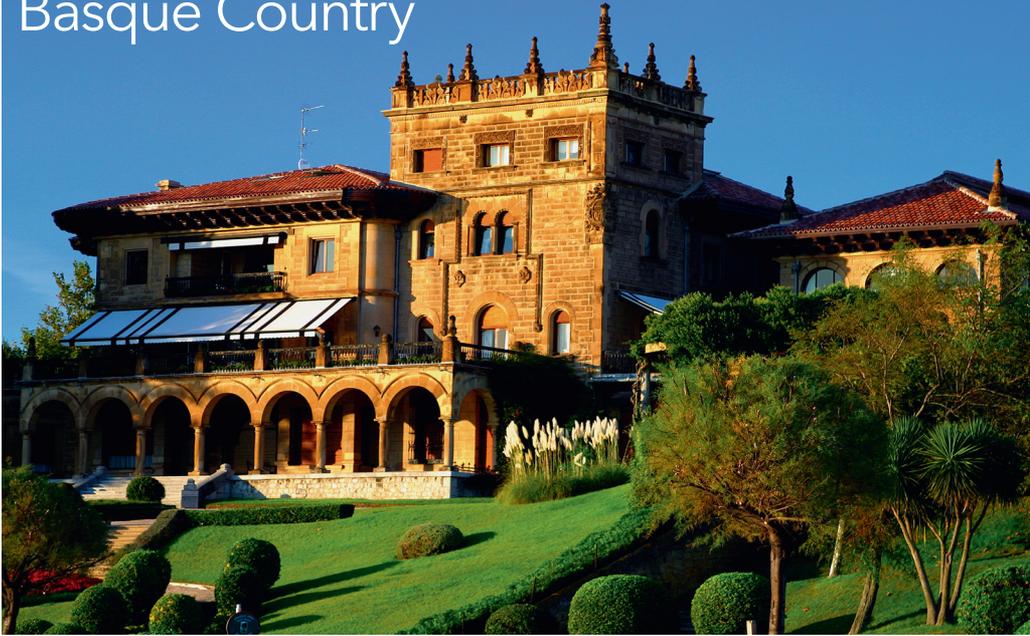
One of Asturias' most historic cities, Avilés is peppered with interesting monuments. Camposagrado Palace dates back to the 1600s, while the English gardens of Ferrera Park will be familiar to anyone who's experienced the work of Capability Brown. Palacio de

Ferrera has been refurbished to a high standard by NH Hotels. It was once the residence of Marquis de Ferrera and keeps many original features. To the east, Palacio de Cutre is similarly verdant and English in style.

During the late 1800s many Asturians fled to the Spanish-speaking nations of the Americas to seek their fortune. Some returned with great wealth and built mansions with lush gardens. These are named *Casas de Indianos* and there are some 2,000 in the region. Tropical plants, bright colours, vivid designs and resplendent facilities make these stellar places to visit.

# LACES

# Basque Country



Whether you head to the coast or inland to the heart of the Basque Country, there's a colourful tapestry of palaces ready to welcome you. It makes sense to start in the north to immerse yourself in the area's intriguing past. Take time out from your *pintxos*-bar crawl in San Sebastián to visit Palacio Miramar – Queen María Cristina's holiday home. It sits between La Concha and Ondarreta beaches amid handsome gardens that are now used like a public park.

The asymmetrical facade of Palacio Aldamar in Getaria looks like embroidery. It'll come as no surprise to find its history woven with that of one of the most influential couturiers of the last century. Cristóbal Balenciaga's mother was a seamstress here when



FROM TOP: VERDANT PALMS SURROUND THE CASTILLO DE ARTEAGA; THE CASTLE'S WINE CELLARS, ONCE USED BY NAPOLEON III

it was used as the summer home of the Marquis de Casa Torres. Today, it houses his work. The town is also known for fish, so stop for lunch.

A pretty drive south-west of Bilbao, brings petrol-heads to medieval Loizaga Tower to admire Europe's only collection of Rolls-Royce to feature every model from 1910-1998. While on the coast at Abra Bay, it's a peculiar contrast to see fishermen's cottages give way to Palacio Lezama Leguizamón, one of Getxo's most iconic mansions. A beach stroll reveals the best of the rest.



FROM FAR LEFT: PALACIO LEZAMA LEGUIZAMÓN AND ITS ELEGANT ORNATE GARDENS; THE NEO-GOTHIC CASTILLO DE ARTEAGA



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: HOTEL IRIARTE JUAREGIA; CAPILLA DE QUEJANA IN AYALA; PALACIO MIRAMAR, ONCE HOME TO QUEEN MARÍA CRISTINA

Photos by Basquetour and Miguel Ángel Álvarez Alberdi

A prime position to take in the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve is from a pool-topped rampart at the beautiful neo-gothic Castillo de Arteaga, now a hotel. Its turrets are numerous and interiors are plush. Queen Eugénie and Napoleon III stored their wines in its cellars, and the owners keep it equally well-stocked. Try some paired with Biscay fish.

Similarly luxurious is the 17th-century Hotel Iriarte Juauregia in Bidania-Goiatz. Surrounded by hills, it's a must for its modern take on Basque cuisine. Alternatively, stay at Hotel Convento San

Roque, a converted cloister in the Cadagua Nature Reserve. The Pozalagua Caves, home to the world's largest concentration of stalactites, is nearby.

Also on the coast is Parador de Hondarribia, Charles V's ivy-clad castle. A medieval fortress during conflict, its romantic facade now melts to reveal warmth.

Sitting amid the Gorobel mountains and rich in tradition, Álava feels like a land held in time. It was once home to figureheads of the Middle Ages. Learn about them at Historic Complex of Quejana, which

comprises chapels, convents and the gothic Ayala. Once owned by Lord and Lady of Ayala, it houses the Sacred Art Museum. Tie in a stay at Palacio de Samaniego, a 17th-century manor house nestled in the foothills of the Cantabrian mountains, at the heart of Rioja Alavesa, where a wine tasting is a must.

As in many of Green Spain's capitals, Vitoria-Gasteiz's Palacio de Montehermoso has been transformed into a cultural complex bridging past and present. Ringed by gardens, there are few better places to ponder the region's past.

# LACES

# Cantabria

IN COMILLAS,  
EL CAPRICO  
DE GAUDI'S  
FACADE IS A  
DELIGHTFUL  
EXAMPLE OF  
MODERNIST DESIGN



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: SANTANDER'S ICONIC MAGDALENA

Time to embark on your own grand tour through Cantabria – one of Spain's more petite regions, but perfectly formed. Discover its history with a journey that gets you under its skin, taking in the palaces that are symbols of architectural glory.

Start in Santander, on the Magdalena Peninsula – an elegant Edwardian resort, once the Spanish royals' summer playground. The iconic Magdalena Palace crowns the hilltop above the Bay of Santander. Completed in 1912, it was a gift from the city to King Alfonso XIII and Victoria Eugenie, said to have been inspired by the Palacio de los Hornillos, in Las Fraguas.

Queen Eugenie especially loved it here as it reminded her of the Isle of Wight, where she grew up. With its pretty gardens, warm coastal breeze, hewn stone walls

BELOW, FROM LEFT: THE ALTAMIRA CAVE, A PREHISTORIC SISTINE CHAPEL OF INTRICATE ART; EL SOPLAO HAS 20KM OF FASCINATING STALACTITES TO SEE



# PA



PALACE; CASA BLANCA AT THE FINCA MUSEO MARQUÉS DE VALDECILLA; PALACIO DE SOÑANES' FACADE; PALACIO DE SOBRELLANO, COMILLAS

and red gables, it's easy to see why. Tour its interiors to gain insight into the royal connection and enjoy the stunning views. Afterwards, make like the Victorians, and take a 'wave bath' at one of the city's blue-flag beaches.

In nearby Solares, don't miss the Finca Museo Marqués de Valdecilla – a fine example of Indiano architecture. Set amid 15ha of elegant gardens behind a grand stone archway, its six buildings were constructed between the late 1800s and early 1900s. These include La Casa Blanca – residence of Ramón Pelayo de la Torriente, a sugar merchant who travelled extensively in Cuba. Its collection includes Indiano artefacts, while La Casuca and Casa San Rafael showcase decorative art from the early 20th century.

Modernism meets neo-Gothic in the coastal town of

Comillas, where two of the region's most exceptional examples of architecture sit side by side. Resplendent amid green parkland stands Palacio de Sobrellano, built by modernist architect Joan Martorell for the Marquis of Comillas in 1888. Its neo-gothic style has a Venetian air, with its teal-stained walls and dark wood floors, while the alabaster staircase in the lobby is stunning. Elsewhere, interiors feature gold-leaf ceilings, murals and art by Antoni Gaudí.

But the jewel in Comillas' crown is the fantastical El Capricho de Gaudí, or 'Gaudí's whim', and capricious it is. Built as a summer villa in 1885, its style is 'trippy oriental-meets-the Middle Ages'. No two sides of the vibrant facade are alike and a Persian-style minaret covered in ceramic sunflowers protrudes from

its chubby bottom.

When it comes to a place to lay your head, continue with a regal theme at one of the region's glam paradises. The 18th-century Gil Blas in the cobbled square of Santillana del Mar boasts traditional design, while its restaurant serves delicious local cuisine. It also sits handily at the gateway to the Paleolithic Altamira cave. Comparable to the Sistine Chapel, visit to see the amazing charcoal and ochre drawings of bison, local fauna and human hands that have adorned the ceiling for around 40,000 years. Further west, stay at Palaci6n de Toñanes to be closer to El Soplao, a cave system that expands over 20km. It doesn't have the cave paintings, but it plays host to a fascinating stalactites and amber deposits. Both are well worth a visit.

Photo by Miguel Ángel de Arriba; Gary Latham; Alamy

# LACES

THIS PAGE:  
THE CABLE-  
STAYED RANDE  
BRIDGE IS ONE OF  
SPAIN'S MOST  
DISTINCTIVE AND  
IS BEST SEEN  
FROM ONE OF  
THE VIEWING  
POINTS IN VIGO

# A CULINARY PILGRIMAGE

*Mingling fresh and salt waters in a succession of inlets along Galicia's dramatic coast sustain local tapas bars with excellent shellfish and crustaceans*

**G**alicians live and breathe the sea. The brackish slate-grey waters that frame its wild land yield some of the world's finest seafood.

While the beaches tempt crowds in summer, its seafood has year-round epicurean appeal. Pilgrims have walked the well-worn *Camino de Santiago* since the ninth century. Today, many come on an edible adventure. Landing in Santiago de Compostela, they head to Rúa da Raíña and Rúa do Franco to feast in superb tapas bars; the cathedral is a backdrop, not the sole draw.

Galicia tends to be overlooked in all the talk of Spain's gastronomic accomplishments, but there's plenty of innovation going on. Some chefs in Santiago and Vigo may well put interesting twists on regional classics, but produce is always key.

The coast is peppered with *rías* – bays and inlets fed by at least one estuary. The meeting of fresh and salt waters here results in the enviable quality of the region's seafood.

The rugged *Rías Altas* to the north-west wears its seafaring soul on its sleeve. Its furthest

reach, Cabo Fisterra is shrouded in mystery. Once considered the edge of the world, the curious *percebes* (barnacles) plucked from the Atlantic that crashes its shore look like something from the past. *Percebeiros* prise fistfuls from the jagged rocks on the ominously nicknamed Coast of Death, in what is perhaps one of the world's most precarious jobs.

*Percebes'* plump, orange flesh is revered by chefs all over Spain. Cooked simply in salt water they are a true taste of the sea: the rougher the





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BRAVE PERCEBEIROS; THEIR PRECIOUS HAUL; THE TOWN OF CORCUBIÓN NEAR FISTERRA; VIGO IS ON GALICIA'S WEST COAST; OYSTERS AND MUSSELS ARE CAUGHT AND SOLD DAILY



Photos by Sarah Coghill

## WHERE TO EAT

**Abastos 2.0** From £18. Santiago de Compostela. [abastosdouspuntozero.es](http://abastosdouspuntozero.es)

**A Curtidoría** From £27. Santiago de Compostela. [acurtidoria.com](http://acurtidoria.com)

**Alborada** From £45. A Coruña. [restaurante-alborada.com](http://restaurante-alborada.com)

**Árbore da Veira** From £49.

A Coruña. [arboredaveira.com](http://arboredaveira.com)

**Casa Camilo** From £26. Santiago de Compostela. *Rúa da Raiña, 24*

**Casa Marcelo** From £22. Santiago de Compostela. [casamarcelo.net](http://casamarcelo.net)

**El de Alberto** From £28. A Coruña. *Rúa Ángel Rebollo, 18*

**Marisquería Ríos** From £30.

A Coruña. *Rúa Río de Quintas, 10*

**Maruja Limón** From £43.

Vigo. [marujalimon.es](http://marujalimon.es)

**O Gato Negro** From £13. Santiago de Compostela. *Rúa da Raiña, s/n*

**Pedra D'Abalar** From £33. Muxía. [pedradabalar.com](http://pedradabalar.com)

**Tira do Cordel** From £38. Fisterra. [tiradocordel.com](http://tiradocordel.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM  
RIGHT: GALICIA'S  
SIGNATURE TORTA DE  
SANTIAGO; PORK  
EMPANADAS; GALICIA'S  
RESTAURANT SCENE PUTS  
LOCAL PRODUCE AT THE  
FORE; QUESADA PASIEGA,  
REGIONAL CHEESECAKE;  
TORRE DE HÉRCULES  
IN A CORUÑA IS  
THE WORLD'S OLDEST  
WORKING LIGHTHOUSE

waves, the juicier these oxygen-hungry beauties are. They're sold in towns such as Muxía, where hauls fetch up to £85 per kilo.

A Coruña is a city fuelled by fish. From a narrow isthmus that winds from the coast, backstreets are scattered with seafood restaurants – razor clams and lobsters competing for space with percebes and sardines on menus. There's also fresh hake with peas and Carril clams, while the region's soupy wet rice dishes make the most of small japonica clams.

Look no further than O Carballiño, Ourense for Galicia's signature *pulpo á feira*. Served on wooden plates, tender octopus is cut into chunks, sprinkled with salt and paprika and finished with a drizzle of olive oil.

The southern Rías Baixas differ from the north as the rocky terrain gives way to pine forests and wild flower meadows. The waters team

with oysters, mussels, clams and scallops. Vigo's oysters are famous and are farmed on the estuary at Arcade. Freshly plucked each morning, they are rushed to shops on the so-called Rúa das Ostras (Oyster Street) and snapped up by locals.

The world's largest mussel beds are also here and mussels are a fixture in tapas bars. Scallops are farmed here, too – the shell is a symbol of the pilgrims, embedded in the Camino de Santiago's pavements.

Rías Baixas is also wine country; albariño grapes grown here produce wines that pair perfectly to fish. Oenophiles make their pilgrimage to Cambados, European City of Wine 2017, which has 21 bodegas.

You can't go far in Galicia without coming across *empanadas*. Bronze dough is stuffed with the likes of sardines, scallops, cockles or cuttlefish and topped with tomato-saffron sauce.

Another local speciality is found back from the coast in Padrón, where the hills are blanketed with the eponymous small green peppers – to many, the essence of Spanish cuisine.

In Galicia's interior, stone granaries perched on stilts, bulging with wheat and maize – the region's biggest crops – dot the landscape. The lush green grasslands surrounding provide good grazing for livestock. Pork dishes such as *caldo gallego* (bean, potato and cabbage soup enriched with pork fat) and *zorza gallega* (chorizo-spiced pork loin) are classics.

In terms of sweets, the iconic *Torta de Santiago* – almond-rich sponge in crisp pastry – is dusted with the Knights of St James cross. Pilgrims brought the nuts initially and they've become a staple. Ring the bell at the San Pelayo de Antealtares convent to buy one from the nuts and complete your own culinary pilgrimage.

Photos by Sarah Coghlin and Shutterstock





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## WHERE TO STAY

**Hostal dos Reis Católicos** Doubles from £230. Praza do Obradoiro, Santiago de Compostela. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

**Hotel Convento de San Benito** Doubles from £45. Praza de San Bieito, A Guarda. [hotelsanbenito.es](http://hotelsanbenito.es)

**Novavila** Doubles from £125. Santo Tomé de Nogueira, Pontevedra. [novavilariasbaixas.com](http://novavilariasbaixas.com)

**O Muíño de Pena** Doubles from £46. O Pino, A Coruña. [omuinodepena.com](http://omuinodepena.com)

**Parador de Monforte de Lemos** Doubles from £75. Monforte de Lemos. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

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# TASTE THE WILD SIDE

Venture to the beautiful, rugged region of Asturias and feast on hearty stews, sweet delights and all manner of cured meats and cheeses matured in its caves

Spanish sailors returning from the New World knew home was around the corner when they spotted the Picos de Europa dot the horizon from their crow's nests. Only a few miles back from the crenellated Atlantic coast they rise to almost 2,650m above sea level. They play host to a national park, millennia-old caves and snaking rivers populated by the region's finest salmon.

Leave the Picos to head inland, or north towards the sea, and the beauty becomes simply extravagant. Roads wind above the clouds to mountain tarns. Apple orchards rise from the mist and produce excellent local cider. Scalloped sandy beaches reinvent their purity with every incoming tide.

Between the mountains and the sea lies the eastern end of Asturias. It has a Celtic past and postcard-worthy rolling countryside.

The most relevant word a visiting gastronome should learn is *ración* – a 'portion' or a 'helping' rather than a ration. This isn't a region of itsy-bitsy tapas and pintxos. In a *chigre* (cider bar) one *ración* of *fabes con almejas* (clam and bean stew)

generally serves two of you.

The region's convenient triangle of principal cities, Oviedo, Gijón and Avilés, are a great hub in which to discover the cuisine. In these authentic-meets-modern hotspots, top restaurants and masterful chefs sit side by side with classic menus of regional favourites. Asturias' quality produce unites the two and it's a potent mix for any food lover.

Simple fish dishes unite the restaurants. Garnishes are generally redundant. A massive Dover sole from Lastres port comes perfectly grilled with oil made from near-perfect local hazelnuts. Hake is a mainstay. Delicious salmon is caught in the icy mountain rivers.

Corn is what gives the free-range yolks an extra vividness here. It's the basic ingredient of the ethereal puffed-up maize fritters known as *tortos de maíz*.

Raised *hórreos* (barns) protect the Asturian kidney beans, *fabes de la granja*. Thin-skinned, plump and creamy, they soak up the flavour of any broth in which they are cooked. *Fabada* is the region's national dish; beans simmered with bacon,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
THE FISHING VILLAGE  
OF CUDILLERO BY NIGHT;  
ONE OF ASTURIAS'  
WELCOMING SIDRERÍAS;  
FABADA, A WARMING  
SPANISH STEW; THE  
COLOURFUL PLAZA  
DEL FONTÁN IN OVIEDO





## WHERE TO EAT

**Casa Eutimio** From £40.  
Lastres. [casaeutimio.com](http://casaeutimio.com)

**Casa Gerardo**  
From £59. Prendes.  
[restaurantecasagerardo.es](http://restaurantecasagerardo.es)

**Casa Marcial** From £60.  
Parres. [casamarcial.com](http://casamarcial.com)

**Casa Tataguyo** From £41.  
Avilés. [tataguyo.com](http://tataguyo.com)

**Ciudadela** From £35. Gijón.  
[restauranteciudadela.com](http://restauranteciudadela.com)

**El Remo** From £18.  
Cudillero. [sidreriaelremo.com](http://sidreriaelremo.com)

**El Rompeolas** From £36.  
Tazones. [rompeolastazones.com](http://rompeolastazones.com)

**Gloria** From £30. Oviedo.  
[estasengloria.com](http://estasengloria.com)

**La Corriquera**  
From £27. Posada.  
[lacorriquera.com](http://lacorriquera.com)

**Los Arcos** From £34.  
Cangas de Onís. Plaza  
Camila Beceña

**Real Balneario** From £45.  
Salinas. [realbalneario.com](http://realbalneario.com)

**Sidrería El Fartuquín**  
From £14. Oviedo.

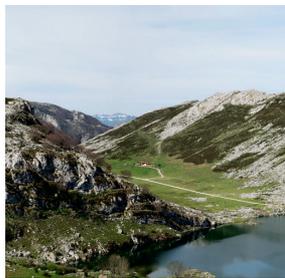
[restauranteelfartuquin.es](http://restauranteelfartuquin.es)

**Tierra Astur** From £20.  
Gijón. [tierra-astur.com](http://tierra-astur.com)





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A TRADITIONAL CIDER PARTY IN CANGAS DE ONÍS TOWN; LAKE ENOL IN PICTURESQUE PICOS DE EUROPA NATIONAL PARK; GAMONÉU DEL VALLE CHEESE; THE POPULAR FOOD MARKET IN GRADO; FABES BEANS, THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR THE REGION'S FABADA STEW; YOU'RE NEVER FAR FROM A STREET-SIDE CAFÉ IN ASTURIAS; DRAMATIC SEA CAVES SURROUNDING CUEVAS DEL MAR BEACH, LLANES



chorizo, sausage, pork rind and black pudding turn into a hotpot. More ambitious cooks hunt out less common sausages: *moscancia*, made with pig's blood, onion, *pimentón* and beef tallow, or *chosco*, with thick-cut pork loin and tongue.

Order up a plate of *embutidos* from a barman and he'll dish up freshly sliced cold cuts. A heaving board of Serrano ham, *lomo* (cured loin), *salchichón*, salami, chorizo and *cecina* is yours for around £5. The sausage is generally venison, the chorizo wild boar and the *cecina*, beef; the former are hunted locally.

At dusk, standing on the cliff above Playa de Barro near Llanes, a sound like wind chimes rises from the valley. Asturias is 'el país del queso' – cheese country – and the sounds are cattle bells. At this eastern end,

the speciality is Gamonéu. Hard or semi-hard, it's streaked with mould. Raw sheep, cow or goat's milk – often all three – go into its manufacture, and it's lightly smoked. The most common is the Gamonéu del Valle variety. All are delicious.

In the market town of Cangas de Onís, those in the know pay almost double for Gamonéu del Puerto. This coveted cheese is made during the summer with milk from high pastures that adds an alpine richness to the buttery, smoky and slightly spiky taste.

Mottled blue Cabrales, ripened in limestone caves, is also a mixed-milk cheese – integrated herds and flocks are part of traditional farming here. Its maturation means, it's not salty and sticky like Roquefort but its taste assaults the tongue with serious flavour – wild

berries, nuts, leather and, some experts claim, beef.

*Arroz con leche* is one of Asturias' favourite desserts. Similar to rice pudding, it's the perfect winter warmer. Locals serve it laced with cinnamon; each restaurant has a slightly different take.

You'll also find Asturians ending a meal with *frixuelos*. These light, crispy pancakes originated in the region and they're most delicious when served simply, sprinkled with lemon and sugar, or with the more decadent topping of crême pâtissière and fresh seasonal fruit. Wash it down with sweet dessert cider or the excellent local apple brandy, *aguardiente de sidra*, which is made from a blend of nine apples.

Whether you are a homeward bound sailor or a gastronomic nomad, there is always a place for you at the table in Asturias.



## WHERE TO STAY

**3 Cabos** Doubles from £76. Valdés.  
[hotelrural3cabos.com](http://hotelrural3cabos.com)

**Castillo del Bosque La Zoreda**  
Doubles from £92. Oviedo.  
[castillodelbosquelazoreda.com](http://castillodelbosquelazoreda.com)

**Cae a Claveles** Doubles from £89.  
Llanes. [caeaclaveles.com](http://caeaclaveles.com)

**Tryp Gijón Rey Pelayo Hotel** Doubles  
from £51. Gijón. [melia.com](http://melia.com)

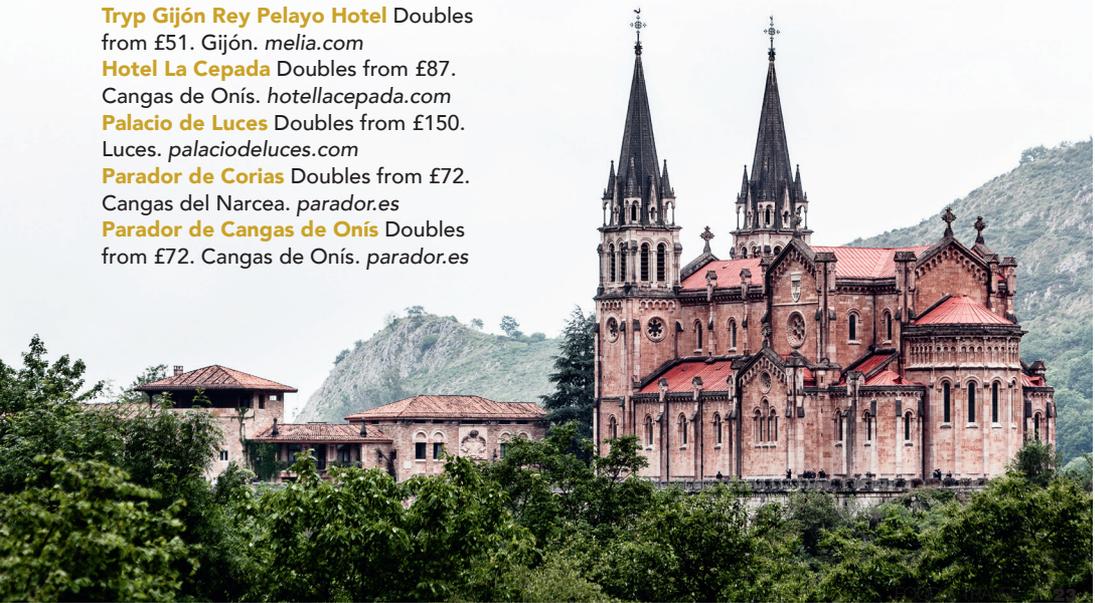
**Hotel La Cepada** Doubles from £87.  
Cangas de Onís. [hotellacepada.com](http://hotellacepada.com)

**Palacio de Luces** Doubles from £150.  
Luces. [palaciodeluces.com](http://palaciodeluces.com)

**Parador de Corias** Doubles from £72.  
Cangas del Narcea. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

**Parador de Cangas de Onís** Doubles  
from £72. Cangas de Onís. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

BELOW: THE LANDMARK  
NEO- ROMANESQUE  
COVADONGA BASILICA



RIGHT: THE HISTORIC COASTAL TOWN OF SAN VICENTE DE LA BARQUERA, WHICH IS FULL OF FANTASTIC FISH RESTAURANTS

From Santander to coastal towns and rural villages, discover Cantabria's lively food scene. It may be petite, but it's serving up some serious culinary clout

## RAW POTENTIAL

Some way from Spain's main tourist trail is Cantabria, where sweeping sand beaches and rocky bays give way to undulating hills and valleys and the snow-clad Picos de Europa. It's rare to witness land and sea meet in such spectacular fashion, and the region's food – no less spectacular – represents the very best produce of both.

In Santander's Esperanza market, an entire floor is devoted to fish from the Bay of Biscay. Bonito del norte, scorpionfish, sardines, hake, prawns and clams take pride of place. Expect sea urchins in the autumn and *angulas* – baby elvers, often eaten with special wooden forks so as not to compromise their

flavour. A 100g portion of the latter will typically set you back around £90.

Cantabrians are justly proud of their food, whether enjoying it in a fine-dining establishment or a bustling pinchos bar. Coastal towns such as San Vicente de la Barquera and Comillas are lined with fish restaurants. Typical dishes include *sorropotún* – fresh bonito (longfin tuna) stewed simply with onions and potatoes – and hake served in parsley-spiked green sauce. In the port of Castro Urdiales, expect your fish served simply grilled or fried.

The true aristocrats of the Cantabrian Sea are its anchovies, and their quality is among the world's finest.

On the Costa Esmeralda, the town of Santoña is an anchovy mecca. Before canning, each fillet is trimmed to perfection, manoeuvred into neat layers and topped with a blanket of sunflower or olive oil (not virgin, though – the taste is too strong). Suck them slowly to get the full flavour, or try them topped on tapas, washed down with a local beer.

As for the region's land creatures, Liébana's pigs produce especially good *compango* (bacon, ham and sausages) due to its altitude and the aging methods used. *Cocido montañés* is one of the most emblematic dishes you'll find them in: a rich

BELOW, FROM LEFT: THE PORT OF CASTRO URDIALES; FRESH CLAMS AT EL JARDÍN DE GIL BLAS; GRILLED SARDINES FROM THE BAY OF BISCAY





Photos by Gary Latham; Cantabria Tourist Board; Miguel Ángel de Arriba Cuadrado

## WHERE TO EAT

**Annu** From £71. San Vicente de la Barquera. [annuagastro.com](http://annuagastro.com)

**Asador Llorente** From £22.

Potes. *Calle San Roque, 3*

**Cañadio** From £32. Santander. [restaurantecanadio.com](http://restaurantecanadio.com)

**Cenador de Amós** From £59. Villaverde de Pontones. [cenadordeamos.com](http://cenadordeamos.com)

**El Jardín de Gil Blas** From £27. Santillana del Mar. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

**El Nuevo Molino** From £50. Puente Arce. [elnuevomolino.es](http://elnuevomolino.es)

**Gurea** From £27. Comillas. *Calle Ignacio Fernández de Castro, 11*

**Hostería de Quijas** From £44. Reocin. [hosteriadequijas.com](http://hosteriadequijas.com)

**Mesón Marinero** From £44. Castro Urdiales. [mesonmarinero.com](http://mesonmarinero.com)

**Solana** From £53. Ampuero. [restaurantesolana.com](http://restaurantesolana.com)

BELOW, FROM LEFT: ANCHOVIES ARE A REGIONAL SPECIALITY; CAÑADÍO RESTAURANT IN SANTANDER; CABÁRCENO, A VAST NATURE RESERVE





FROM LEFT: RURAL CANTABRIA; EL JARDÍN DE GIL BLAS. OPPOSITE PAGE. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *SOBAOS*; A BAR IN COMILLAS; FRESH FISH DISH AT HOSTERÍA DE QUIJAS; CLAMS. SANTANDER MARKET; VIEW OVER CASA-PALACIO EL PROMONTORIO – ONCE THE BOTÍN FAMILY HOME – TO THE BAY OF SANTANDER; TEZANOS CHEESEMAKERS; DIVIRIN CHEESE; TUDANCA CATTLE ARE FOUND IN THE SAJA-NANSA VALLEY

## WHERE TO STAY

### Abba Palacio de Soñanes

Doubles from £75. Villacarriedo. [abbapalacio.desonaneshotel.com](http://abbapalacio.desonaneshotel.com)

### Balneario de Solares

Doubles from £69. Solares. [castillateral.com](http://castillateral.com)

### Casona Los Caballeros

Doubles from £66. Santillana del Mar. [casonaloscaballeros.com](http://casonaloscaballeros.com)

### Hotel Casa del Marqués

Doubles from £70. Santillana del Mar. [hotelcasadelmarques.com](http://hotelcasadelmarques.com)

### Hotel Casona Malvasía

Doubles from £76. Cabezón de Liébana. [hotelcasonamalvasia.com](http://hotelcasonamalvasia.com)

### Hotel del Oso

Doubles from £63. Cosgaya. [hoteldeloso.com](http://hoteldeloso.com)

### Hotel Palacio de La Peña

Doubles from £248. Ajo. [hotelpalaciodelapeña.com](http://hotelpalaciodelapeña.com)

### Hotel Palacio García

*Quijano* Doubles from £69. Corrales de Buelna. [garciaquijano.com](http://garciaquijano.com)

### Parador de Santillana

*Gil Blas* Doubles from £71. Santillana del Mar. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

### Parador de Limpías

Doubles from £60. Limpías. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

stew of bacon, chorizo and *morcilla* (black pudding) with potato, cabbage, and local white beans. Another hearty variation is *cocido lebaniego*, which includes dried beef and chickpeas from Potes. Traditionally, the soup is eaten as a starter and the rest as a main.

Cattle are as prized here today as the steppe bison depicted in the Altamira cave were in the Paleolithic era. In the hillier pastures you'll see the delicate grey Tudanca cows – often consumed as veal chops – with their lyre-shaped horns and black kohl-lined eyes. Chefs also value the meat produced by the Monchina and Pardo-Alpina breeds, which is beautifully marbled and has a unique flavour.

With good cattle comes great dairy. In the Valles Pasiegos, around an hour's drive from Altamira and historic Santillana del Mar, is Selaya. Here, the artisan cheese scene is flourishing. Be sure to try fresco, a wettish curd that's a staple of Cantabrian breakfasts, and Pasiego, with a rough-crusted, mushroomy rind.

Closer to the Picos de Europa, cheese is almost a religion. The best varieties include Picón (a strong blue), the tangy smoked Áliva, and semi-hard Pido. Also prized are the buttery Quesucos de Liébana, smoked over juniper for a delightfully woody flavour.

Cantabria also has a strong baking tradition, and *sobao* is the region's *pâtisserie extraordinaire* – a rich sponge with hints of lemon and rum. It's served cold at breakfast or warm as a dessert in restaurants, drizzled with custard. Cheesecake-like *quesada pasiega* is another claim to fame, while *brazo de gitano* is the Pas area's delectable version of a Swiss roll.

In the autumn, around the Liérganes area and south to San Roque de Riomiera, locals forage for fruit such as blackberries and bilberries, used to make jams and sweet dishes. You may well find them alongside sobaos, too.

Cantabria might be a small region geographically, but it more than makes up for it with its big flavours.



# LAND OF PLENTY

*From unhurried pintxos at intimate tables, to delectable feasts of Michelin-star quality, the Basque Country's zeal for good food is positively all-consuming*

For Basques, food is life. Locals don't merely consume it, they treat it with love and respect. The result? A dynamic culture that fuses tradition and great produce with innovation. From the humblest pintxos bars, to the finest Michelin-starred restaurants, chefs strive to be the best.

Along the coastline, against the backdrop of the Atlantic's restless waves, you'll find chefs making the most of the Basque bounty. Each

harbour offers its own variation on miniature bites and small plates; check what the locals are ordering first, then simply follow your nose to see how the region's quality produce shine.

The temperate climate of the Basque Country results in an abundance of ingredients. At Mugaritz outside San Sebastián, Andoni Luis Aduriz rolls out two-star-Michelin cuisine that celebrates and maximises the area's wares. As does

Pedro Subijana, whose three-star restaurant Akelafe overlooks the Bay of Biscay. The quality in Vitoria-Gasteiz, the province of Álava, Capital of Gastronomy 2014, is no different, with fine pintxos and restaurants aplenty.

Travel inland from one mountain pass to another and follow in the footsteps of the shepherds who produce the renowned Idiazabal cheese. Aged in caves and made with raw sheep's milk, it has a tangy depth of flavour.





CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: SAN SEBASTIÁN; RED MULLET DISH AT ZUBEROA; GILDA, THE BASQUE'S ICONIC PINTXO; AZURMENDI

## WHERE TO EAT

**Asador Etxebarri** From £149. Axpe.  
[asadoretxebarri.com](http://asadoretxebarri.com)

**Asador Portuetxe** From £70.

San Sebastián. [asadorportuetxe.com](http://asadorportuetxe.com)

**Atari Gastroteka** From £11.

San Sebastián. Calle Mayor, 18

**Azurmendi** From £159.

Larrabetzu, Bilbao. [azurmendi.biz](http://azurmendi.biz)

**Boroa Jatetxea** From £98.

Etxano. [boroa.com](http://boroa.com)

**Elkano** From £76. Getaria.

[restauranteelkano.com](http://restauranteelkano.com)

**Ganbara** From £12. San Sebastián.  
[ganbarajatetxea.com](http://ganbarajatetxea.com)

**Gatz** From £12. Bilbao. [bargatz.com](http://bargatz.com)

**Guria** From £17. Bilbao.

[restauranteguria.com](http://restauranteguria.com)

**Kokotxa** From £85. San Sebastián.

[restaurantekokotxa.com](http://restaurantekokotxa.com)

**Petritegi** From £26. Astigarraga.

[petritegi.com](http://petritegi.com)

**Toloño** From £11. Vitoria-Gasteiz.

[tolonobar.com](http://tolonobar.com)

**Zuberoa** From £115. Oiartzun. [zuberoa.com](http://zuberoa.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM  
 RIGHT: THE DRAMATIC  
 GUGGENHEIM  
 MUSEUM, BILBAO  
 WITH LOUISE  
 BOURGEOIS' *MAMAN*  
 SCULPTURE; DINE  
 ALFRESCO IN BILBAO;  
 SIDRERIA BARS ARE A  
 BARREL OF LAUGHS;  
 BOATS DOT THE PORT  
 AT GETARIA; ENEKO  
 ATXA PLATES UP

The rolling hills also make for excellent grazing. Here cows are reared for meat, – braised beef cheeks are a speciality – and lard is the favoured fat to use in traditional Basque cuisine.

Market traders have the inside line on the region's best produce. Top of the list are Álava's waxy potatoes, green Gernika peppers, the slightly sour cherries used in *pastel vasco* (local almond cake) and teardrop peas from Arrieta, so prized they're often considered tantamount to caviar.

In the dense Urkiola Natural Park, foraging for mushrooms is treated as sport. Be on the lookout for plump ceps, *setas* and *hongos*. There's also a wide range at Ordizia's market.

Fresh fish is a Basque mainstay. Gunmetal-blue anchovies from the Bay of Biscay may be small in size, but they are big on flavour. Marinated in oil and vinegar,

*boquerones* (fresh anchovies) are superb.

Boats from Bermeo, Getaria and Ondarroa trawl for *bonito del norte*. Large chunks are simmered for *marmitako*, a stew with peppers and tomatoes. The prize catch for connoisseurs is line-caught *merluza* (hake). It is tender, white-fleshed and black-skinned. No top chef would dare to leave it off the menu. Juan Mari Arzak always features it at his three-star restaurant.

West of Vitoria-Gasteiz and 50km south of Bilbao, there's another not-so-well hidden treasure: the salt pans of Salinas de Añana. This is where brine from three natural springs in the valley is evaporated by wind and sun to produce excellent-quality white salt. It's a magic ingredient flavouring the cooking of great Spanish chefs: salt cod is a mainstay on menus.

Bilbao has its own culinary draws, on top of attracting

design enthusiasts with the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum, which has just turned 20. Chefs, tired of the usual pintxos offerings, started to serve delicacies such as foie gras on aged beef and brochettes of offal. Young chefs continue to push the boundaries in more formal restaurants, remaining true to, while playing with, indigenous ingredients. Try the likes of pigs' trotters Biscayne-style, with a red pepper and jamón ibérico sauce, Tolosa beans cooked with bacon, *morcilla* (blood sausage) and chorizo, or spider crab *a la Donostiarra* – baked in the shell with leeks and onions, topped with breadcrumbs.

The slightly effervescent wine *txakoli* is also produced here. Poured from a height to enliven the bubbles, and priced at around £2 a glass, it enhances pintxos perfectly. A brilliant excuse to raise a glass, or two, if you ask us.

Photos by Erika Ede; ©FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa\_UK/2017; David Muncharaz; Basquetour; San Sebastián Tourism





## WHERE TO STAY

**Hotel Akelaré** Doubles from £297.

San Sebastián. [akelarre.net](http://akelarre.net)

**Hotel María Cristina** Doubles from £234.

San Sebastián. [hotel-mariacristina.com](http://hotel-mariacristina.com)

**Hotel de Londres** Doubles from £112.

San Sebastián. [hlondres.com](http://hlondres.com)

**Miró Hotel** Doubles from £88. Bilbao.

[mirohotelbilbao.com](http://mirohotelbilbao.com)

**Marqués de Riscal** Doubles from £287.

Eliciego. [hotel-marquesderiscal.com](http://hotel-marquesderiscal.com)

**Palacio De Elorriaga** Doubles from £58.

Vitoria-Gasteiz. [hotelpalacioelorriaga.com](http://hotelpalacioelorriaga.com)

**Parador de Hondarribia** Doubles from

£128. Hondarribia. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

**Parador de Argómaniz** Doubles from

£57. Álava. [parador.es](http://parador.es)

**Meliá Bilbao** Doubles from £90.

Bilbao. [melia.com](http://melia.com)

**Villa Soro** Doubles from £106.

San Sebastián. [villasoro.com](http://villasoro.com)



# Green SPAIN uncorked



Once fallen from favour, Basque Country wines have made a spectacular comeback, with a slew of

Basques have two styles of 'high pour' when it comes to *txakoli*. The barman either starts low, bottle-top to the rim of the glass and raises his arm above his head, or he starts bottle high, glass low and goes for it. In either case the aim is to create a flow of wine while releasing its residual carbon dioxide, resulting in a frothy head. It doesn't last, but it does add to the enjoyment.

This once-celebrated wine made from white hondarribi zuri grapes almost vanished. Only farmers with vines made it, but the late 20th-century fashion for new Basque cookery changed that as chefs started to promote it.

Today wineries use modern techniques for consistency and quality, while the pintxos bar trend has added to its popularity.

There are now three protected designations of origin (PDO) regions: Bizkaia and Getaria, on the coast, and around Álava, the tiny appellation, Arabako Txakolina, which was established in 2002. Travel the *Ruta del Txakoli* to find the best producers.

The small-production rosé txakoli is delicious and has risen from fad to high fashion. It's produced near Bilbao. This industrial port with its Guggenheim museum, as well as San Sebastián – chock-a-block with bars and Michelin-

starred restaurants – draw millions of tourists, but the capital of the País Vasco (Basque Country) is Vitoria-Gasteiz. South of the city, Rioja Alavesa, the smallest of the three Rioja sub-regions, centres on medieval Laguardia. Marqués de Riscal has its futuristic winery in Elciego. Architecturally, Ysios runs a close second and Baigorri has a modern restaurant with mountain views.

The wines, tempranillo mainly, may cost as little as £4.50 a bottle, while an Artadi Pagos Viejos will make a bigger dent in the budget. Either way, they deliver at every level and so does the Basque Country.

# BASQUE COUNTRY



cutting-edge wineries now joining Bilbao's Guggenheim and San Sebastián at the top of must-see lists



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: BODEGAS YSIOS IN LAGUARDIA; FRANK GEHRY'S MARQUÉS DE RISCAL HOTEL; A RED MADE FROM THE REGION'S BELTZA GRAPE

## WHERE TO TASTE

**Ameztoi** Tastings from €8. Getaria. [txakoliameztoi.com](http://txakoliameztoi.com)

**Bodega Astobiza** Tastings from €10. Okondo. [astobiza.es](http://astobiza.es)

**Bodegas Baigorri** Tastings from €11. Samaniego. [bodegasbaigorri.com](http://bodegasbaigorri.com)

**Bodegas Ysios** Tastings from €12. Laguardia. [clubysios.com](http://clubysios.com)

**Casa Primicia** Tastings from €8. Laguardia. [bodegascasaprimicia.com](http://bodegascasaprimicia.com)

**Luis Cañas** Tastings from €8. Villabuena. [luiscanas.com](http://luiscanas.com)

**Marqués de Riscal** Tastings from €10. Elciego. [marquesderiscal.com](http://marquesderiscal.com)

**Talai Berri Txakolina** Tastings from €10. Zarautz. [talaiberri.com](http://talaiberri.com)

**Tierra** Tastings from €8. Labastida. [tierrayvino.com](http://tierrayvino.com)

**Txomin Etxaniz** Tastings from €16. Getaria. [txominetxaniz.com](http://txominetxaniz.com)

**Valdemar** Tastings from €13. Oion. [valdemar.es](http://valdemar.es)



Galician wine country is worth a pilgrimage in itself, its undulating landscape providing the perfect

Pilgrimage done and dusted, turn sharp left at Santiago de Compostela and head for Cambados, Pontevedra or Vigo. These seaside towns cling to the *rías* (inlets) like limpets or hooved *percebes*, Galicia's favourite mollusc, while the rippling landscapes here are *baixos* (low). Linked, the two words form *Rías Baixas*, spiritual home of albariño, one of Spain's finest white wines. Its appeal isn't just the ripe citrus flavour, the hint of apricot and saltiness. The key is that it perfectly complements all seafood.

The wine routes of the *Rías Baixas* include five sub-regions: Condado do Tea, Soutomaior, Ribeira do Ulla, O Rosal and Val do Salnés. This last is the most

westerly. Historians believe Cistercian monks introduced albariño during the 12th century at the monastery of Santa María in Armenteira. Nearby, Zárate winery, owned by the same family since 1707, is distinctive for its restored dovecote.

Albariño isn't the only grape in Galicia. Nor is *Rías Baixas* the only wine-producing area. Ribeiro, a lush kaleidoscope of rivers, rock pools, gorges and terraced vineyards drifting into valleys, has its own eponymous grapes. Traditionally they made an everyday quaffing wine, sipped from ceramic bowls – worth hunting for in Ribadavia, once Galicia's capital for a short time. Other little known varieties

such as treixadura figure in the assemblages vinified at Pazo Casanova's bodega, near Ourense.

There are three other PDOs: Ribeira Sacra, Valdeorras and Monterrei. Here white wines made from godello grapes have created a frenzy in the press and revived the wineries' fortunes. Pazos del Rey, A Coroa, Castro de Lobarzán and a pack of rivals draw high praise. It's 'Spain's emerging hope as an equivalent to the great white Burgundies,' believes one respected oenographer.

With Galician wine tasting as good when drunk at home as they do in the likes of Michelin-starred Yayo Daporta in Cambados, we don't doubt it for a second.

Photo by Xurxo Lobato



# GALICIA

conditions for the famed albariño grape – along with several others creating a stir among oenophiles

## WHERE TO TASTE

**Bodegas Fillaboa** Tastings from £4.

Salvaterra do Miño. [bodegasfillaboa.com](http://bodegasfillaboa.com)

**Bodegas Martín Códax** Tastings from £4.

Cambados. [martincodax.com](http://martincodax.com)

**Bodega Morgadiño** Tastings from £4.

Puga. [bodegasgrm.com](http://bodegasgrm.com)

**Casal de Armán** Tastings from £4.

Ribadavia. [bodegascasaldearman.com](http://bodegascasaldearman.com)

**Coto de Gomariz** Tastings from £4.

Leiro. [cotodegomariz.com](http://cotodegomariz.com)

**Paco & Lola** Tastings from £4.

Meaño. [pacolola.com](http://pacolola.com)

**Pazo Baión** Tastings from £9.

Vilanova de Arousa. [pazobaion.com](http://pazobaion.com)

**Pazo de Fefiñanes** Tastings from £4.

Cambados. [fefinanes.com](http://fefinanes.com)

**Pazo de Galegos** Tastings from £4.

San Pedro de Vilanova. [pazodegalegos.com](http://pazodegalegos.com)

**Pazo de Rubianes** Tastings from £4.

Vilagarcía de Arousa. [pazoderubianes.com](http://pazoderubianes.com)

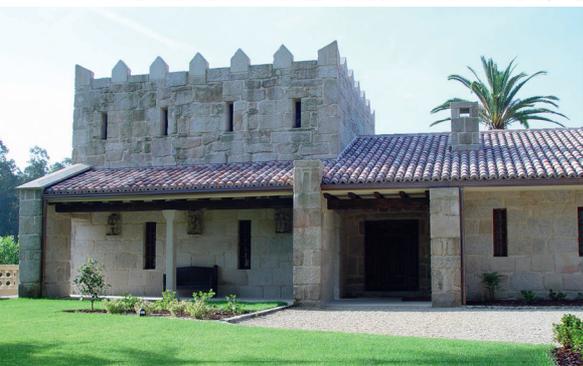
**Pazo Señorans** Tastings from £4.

Meis. [pazodesenorans.com](http://pazodesenorans.com)

**Ramón do Casar** Tastings from £4.

Prado de Miño. [ramondocasar.es](http://ramondocasar.es)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BODEGAS MARTÍN CÓDAX; PAZO SEÑORANS; RAMÓN DO CASAR VINEYARDS; BODEGAS FILLABOA





Kissed by Atlantic breezes and rich in verdant pastures, Cantabria has long warmed visitors with its

Potes's annual Fiesta del Orujo celebrates Cantabria's love affair with 'firewater'. Distilling grape pomace isn't unique to this townlet in the foothills of the Picos de Europa, but it is the centre of production. The intricate process hasn't changed since the Middle Ages and the tradition of heating the liquor in an *alquitara* (copper pot still) over a wood fire survives.

Potes is a key stop on the *Camino Lebaniego* – a pilgrim road to the Santo Toribio de Liébana monastery – that's offered a detour for those en route to Santiago de Compostela since the Middle Ages.

Expect 360-degree views of the imposing Picos de Europa with its magical

forests, snow-capped peaks, rolling valleys and vineyards when you take a ride on the Fuente Dé cable car. Not for the faint-hearted, the glassy cabin swoops through the atmospheric mist that clings to the mountains to height of 1,823m in a mere four minutes. Reason enough for tipple, no?

The raw orujo spirit is indeed fiery, but the aged gran reserva has a softness. Distilleries, such as Picos de Cabariezo, Diosanjana and Sierra del Oso have branched into liqueurs flavoured with wild herbs or mountain honey. More recently, they've developed alcohol-spiked chocolate and coffee cremas.

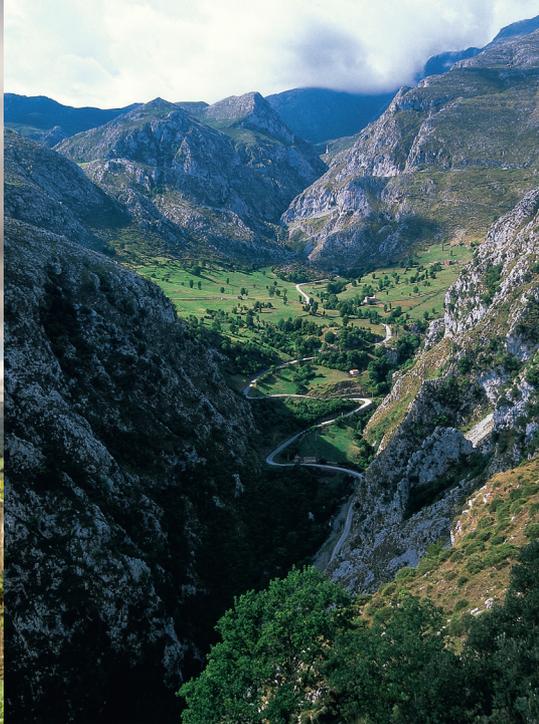
In the past orujo was a

byproduct of winemaking in the Valle de Liébana. Cantabrian wine suffered in the 20th century but it is making a comeback thanks to the likes of Bodegas Vidular, inland from the resort of Laredo. It is owned by the Durán family, who hope 'to restore the ancestral culture of winemaking'. Sel d'Aiz, another stellar producer is similarly raising the profile.

Their wines are a perfect match to fish – particularly hake from the Cantabrian Sea – and are served in many restaurants.

Arriving in Santander, few passengers anticipate the countryside awaiting them. 'Unspoiled' may be overused, but it catches the spirit of region perfectly.

CLOCKWISE FROM  
MAIN: VINEYARDS AT  
BODEGAS SEL D'AIZ;  
THE BEAUTIFUL  
LIÉBANA AREA, THE  
HOME OF ORUJO; THE  
FUENTE DE CABLE  
CAR TRAVELS ACROSS  
PICOS DE EUROPA;  
A PRODUCER WITH A  
COPPER ALQUITARA  
THAT DISTILLS ORUJO



fiery orujo. Now the region is gaining a following for its mellower wines that pair perfectly with seafood

## WHERE TO TASTE

**Bodegas Behetría** Tastings, free.

Villayuso de Cieza.

[bodegasbehetria.es](http://bodegasbehetria.es)

**Bodega El Pendo** Tastings from £17.

Escobedo. [pendo.es](http://pendo.es)

**Bodega Picos de Cabariego** Tastings, free.

Cabezón de Liébana.

[vinosylicorespicos.es](http://vinosylicorespicos.es)

**Bodegas Sel d'Aiz** Tastings from £6.

Castillo Pedroso. [seldaiz.com](http://seldaiz.com)

**Bodegas Vidular** Tastings from £7.

Junta de Voto. [bodegasvidular.es](http://bodegasvidular.es)

**Casona Micaela** Tastings from £9.

Valle de Villaverde. [casonamicaela.com](http://casonamicaela.com)

**Diosanjana** Tastings, free.

Potes. [diosanjana.com](http://diosanjana.com)

**El Coteron** Tastings, free.

Argüébanes. [elcoteron.com](http://elcoteron.com)

**Orujos de Liébana** Tastings from £3.

Santander. [orulisa.com](http://orulisa.com)

**Sierra del Oso** Tastings, free.

Ojedo. [sierradeloso.com](http://sierradeloso.com)

**Viña Lancina** Tastings, free.

Bárcena de Cicero. [lancina.es](http://lancina.es)





Asturias wouldn't be Asturias without apples. As much at the heart of local agriculture today as it

A wrinkled coastline buffers incoming Atlantic breakers. Snow-capped peaks of the Picos de Europa guard its back. Between them lie the green valleys of Asturias. Every spring, Asturias celebrate *la Semana de la Floración del Manzano* – apple blossom week. It isn't just a moment to celebrate the new season. With almost religious fervour they connect to nature's gift: cider apples.

Apples grew here in Roman times, and farmers were planting orchards by the 11th century. The council regulating cider-makers PDO permits the use of 76 native varieties. With picturesque names such as *verdialona*, *solarina*, *raxao*, *san roqueña* and *panquerina*, they provide the blend of sharp, bitter and sweet fruit that gives a balanced finish.

A *llagar* is to cider what a winery is to viticulture. Criss-crossing the cider routes around the towns of Oviedo, Villaviciosa, Gijón

and Siero opens the door to artisan producers such as Ramos del Valle, Pomarina or Trabanco. Cheese and cider route *Ruta'l Quesu y la Sidra* combines farmhouse cider with world-famous Cabrales blue cheese.

Most *sidra* is 'natural': unfiltered, slightly cloudy and definitely not fizzy. Pouring it seems theatrical to outsiders and essential to locals. The *escanciador's* task is to aerate the liquid enough to turn it slightly spritzly. In a *sidrería* cellar this means opening the barrel and letting the liquid arc into the glass. The technique, *espichar*, has extended to also mean anything from elaborate tapas snacking to a full-blown meal in the cellar.

In bars (*chigres*), there are about 100 in Gijón alone (nobody orders less than a bottle at a time), the trick is to send a stream from above head height into a container just below the waist. There's a gutter at the foot of the bar for

spillage and sawdust to prevent slipping.

More recently a handful of *sidrerías* have broken with tradition, creating brands such as *Españar*, *Pomarina* and *Tareco*. Deemed *Nueva Expresión*, they have been filtered to achieve a wine-like clarity. *Sidra espumosa* (sometimes called *enchampanada*, guess why!) is bubbly like champagne. *Llagares Valverán* produces ice cider from a mix of 20 varieties.

Asturias isn't only about cider. It hides a small wine-growing area, almost unknown outside of the region. Close to the Somiedo National Park, vines grow on vertiginous slopes. There are only five growers within the PDO borders. *Monasterio de Corias'* wines, the name derives from a roadside Benedictine abbey, is alone worth the detour. Perhaps that is the key to understanding Asturias. Once you scratch the surface, you'll find many hidden secrets in store.



was in Roman times, the region's cider industry is now being joined by a handful of little-known wineries



## WHERE TO TASTE

### **Bodegas Antonio Álvarez (Chicote)**

Tastings from £8. Limés.

[antonchicote.com](http://antonchicote.com)

### **Bodegas Chacón Buelta** Tastings from £8.

Cerredo. *Carretera General, s/n*

### **Bodegas Monasterio de Corias**

Tastings from £4. Cangas del Narcea.

[monasteriodecorias.es](http://monasteriodecorias.es)

### **Bodegas Vidas** Tastings from £8.

Cangas del Narcea. [bodegavidas.com](http://bodegavidas.com)

### **Llagar de Quelo** Tastings from £8.

Tiñana. [sidraquelo.com](http://sidraquelo.com)

### **Llagar Castañón** Tastings from £4.

Quintueles. [sidracastanon.com](http://sidracastanon.com)

### **Llagar Cortina** Tastings from £4.

Villaviciosa. [sidracortina.com](http://sidracortina.com)

### **Llagar El Trole** Tastings from £4.

Cabueñes. [lagareltrole.com](http://lagareltrole.com)

### **Llagar Sidra Basilio** Tastings from £4.

Arriondas. [sidrabasilio.es](http://sidrabasilio.es)

### **Llagar Trabanco** Tastings from £4.

Gijón. [casatrabanco.com](http://casatrabanco.com)

### **Vinos La Muriella** Tastings from £8.

Cangas del Narcea. *Vega de Rengos, 0*

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: GRAPE PICKING; AN ESCANCIADOR; APPLE HARVEST; ASTURIAN GRAPES; A TYPICAL LLAGAR; SIDRA BRUT



# 48hrs SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Galicia's capital has attracted pilgrims for centuries. They now make the journey for stellar seafood, the iconic cathedral and copious cultural hotspots. Drop by a lively square, order *pulpo á feira* and live like a local

The capital of Galicia marks the end of the *Camino de Santiago*, or 'Way of St James', a network of routes trodden by pilgrims since the Middle Ages. Some have walked nearly 800km as they gasp for the first time in awe at the turreted cathedral, which is believed to be the resting place of Santiago Apostol.

Many head straight to the rooftop for sweeping views over the old town and Praza do Obradoiro. Take a tour within to uncover gems such as Pazo de Xelmírez, the bishop's palace, where medieval feasts were once held. In contrast, opposite is the neoclassical city hall, the Pazo de Raxoi which perches on a colonnade of 14 arches.

This time-worn city boasts many impressive buildings. Visit the Museo do Pobo Galego, housed in the former convent of Santo Domingos de Bonaval on the edge of pretty Parque de Bonaval. Here, you can learn about the region's art,

archeology and customs, then peer down the trippy triple-spiral staircase. Next door is the Pritzker Prize-winning Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporáneo with its granite facade that has aged gracefully to blend in with its historic surroundings.

Another landmark is Mercado de Abastos – a covered market of 300 stalls where you can try local delicacies and cured meats from Galicia's countryside. The must-try dish is *pulpo á feira* – octopus with olive oil and hot paprika served on wooden plates – paired with a refreshing albariño from the Rías Baixas area.

Along the backstreets are shops selling souvenirs. *Meigas* are witches that form part of local folklore tales, bagpipes remind you of Santiago's Celtic connections and scallop shells are the symbol of the Camino. Don't leave without a *Torta de Santiago* – the almond cake marked with a cross that tempts pilgrims of its own.

## Where to EAT AND STAY

### RESTAURANTS

#### *Abastos 2.0*

From £18pp.  
[abastoscompostela.com](http://abastoscompostela.com)

#### *A Cantina do Gaiás*

From £8pp.  
[cantinagaias.com](http://cantinagaias.com)

#### *Café Casino*

From £18pp.  
[cafecasino.gal](http://cafecasino.gal)

#### *Casa Camilo*

From £22pp.  
Rua de Raiña, 24

#### *Casa Marcelo*

From £22pp.  
[casamarcelo.net](http://casamarcelo.net)

#### *O Gato Negro*

From £13pp.  
Rúa da Raiña, s/n

### HOTELS

#### *Altair Hotel*

Doubles from £84.  
[altairhotel.net](http://altairhotel.net)

#### *Hostal dos Reis Católicos*

Doubles from £230.  
[paradores.es](http://paradores.es)

#### *Monumento San Francisco*

Doubles from £150.  
[sanfranciscohm.com](http://sanfranciscohm.com)

#### *Pazo de Altamira*

Doubles from £71.  
[pazodealtamira.com](http://pazodealtamira.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MARVEL AT THE ARCHITECTURAL WONDER THAT IS GAIÁS, CITY OF CULTURE; INVITING INTERIORS AT CAFE CASINO; MARCOS CERQUEIRO, OWNER OF ABASTOS 2.0; THE DRAMATIC TURRETS OF THE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA CATHEDRAL DOMINATE THE CITY'S SKYLINE

## FURTHER afield

**Gaiás, City of Culture** Santiago may be steeped in history, but it's taken a giant leap into the future with Gaiás on its periphery. Architect Peter Eisenman designed the cultural complex, which includes a 43m-tall museum, state-of-the-art library and centre for innovation. It soars into the sky amid a landscaped park with a lake, forested hillside and views back to the cathedral's spires.



## 48hrs OVIEDO

More than the sum of its ubiquitous ciders, we raise a glass to Asturias' attractive capital, a city that opens the door to an ancient kingdom whose culinary traditions are as flourishing as its modern art scene

Where to  
EAT AND STAY

Set between towering mountains and the Bay of Biscay, this compact city is easy to explore on foot. Start in the traffic-free old quarter at the cathedral, which holds treasures dating to the reign of Alfonso II.

Oviedo has kept its links with the past and preserved many architectural gems such as the baroque Camposagrado Palace, just off Plaza de la Catedral.

The Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias is a short stroll away. Its 15,000-piece strong collection spans the Middle Ages to the 21st century. Nearby, you'll admire the setting of the Museo Arqueológico, in a 16th-century Benedictine monastery, as much as the treasures held within.

Put your walking shoes on and head to Naranco Hill to discover Unesco-listed pre-Romanesque churches, Santa María del Naranco and San Miguel de Lillo.

To see the ebb and flow of daily life, visit Fontán

square for the weekend market. Or explore Calle Gascona (known as Cider Boulevard) with its traditional *sidrerías* where the local tippie can be enjoyed with tapas. When it comes to dining, Oviedo has a club whose members protect local recipes handed down through the generations.

It would be rude not to tie in a visit to Avilés, a mere 25 minutes drive from Oviedo. Take a tour of its medieval old quarter – one of the most beautiful and best preserved in Asturias. You'll love atmospheric Galiana Arcade Street and Sabugo, both former city centres.

Completing the principal city triangle, Gijón kisses the coast around 30km from here. It's home to fabulous Roman ruins worthy of the trip. Head to Campo Valdés square to see the incredible Roman baths then wander through the old fisherman's quarter, before soaking up the buzz of Corrida Street and the Plaza Mayor.

## RESTAURANTS

**Casa Fermín, Oviedo**

From £31pp.  
[casafermin.com](http://casafermin.com)

**Casa Lin, Avilés**

From £25pp.  
[sidreriacasalin.com](http://sidreriacasalin.com)

**Casa Tataguyo, Avilés**

From £40pp.  
[tataguyo.com](http://tataguyo.com)

**Casa Zabala, Gijón**

From £37pp.  
[casazabala.com](http://casazabala.com)

**Gloria, Oviedo**

From £22pp.  
[estasengloria.com](http://estasengloria.com)

**La Galana, Gijón**

From £22pp.  
[restauranteasturiano-lagalana.es](http://restauranteasturiano-lagalana.es)

## HOTELS

**Abba Playa Gijón**

Doubles from £95.  
[abbagijonhotel.com](http://abbagijonhotel.com)

**Barceló Oviedo**

Doubles from £69.  
[barcelo.com](http://barcelo.com)

**Hotel NH Collection Palacio de Avilés**

Doubles from £100.  
[nh-collection.com](http://nh-collection.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GIJÓN'S HARBOUR REVEALS AN AUTHENTIC SNAPSHOT OF THE REGION; AVILÉS' CALLE GALIANA IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO ENJOY LOCAL WINE AND TAPAS AFTER A DAY OUT; THERE'S A WEALTH OF HISTORY TO DISCOVER IN OVIEDO'S HANDSOME CATHEDRAL SQUARE

## FURTHER afield

**Centro Niemeyer, Avilés** This staggeringly modern building was designed by the revered Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, and is the only example of his work in Spain. An auditorium for 100 spectators houses films and exhibitions, which opens onto a sweeping plaza with a viewing tower and three-storey dome-shaped museum. [niemeyercenter.org](http://niemeyercenter.org)

**Jardín Botánico Atlántico, Gijón** A living museum which specialises in the flora and vegetation from the Atlantic areas of northern Spain, this is the only garden in the country to recreate four different climates in one place. Take a break from the bustle of this dynamic city with a peaceful stroll through its 16ha of elegant gardens. [botanico.gijon.es](http://botanico.gijon.es)



# 48hrs SANTANDER

This one-time royal playground fuses easy urban beaches and an enviable food scene to put it front and centre for a weekend away. Enjoy freshly caught grilled seafood along the shore for a true taste of it

## Where to EAT AND STAY

The sweeping stretch of Bay of Santander makes a superb entrance to this port city, the capital of Cantabria. Watch the ferries arrive on a stroll along the Paseo de Pereda promenade past the copper statues of children jumping into the water. Then immerse yourself in the depths of the Cantabrian Sea at Museo Marítimo del Cantábrico, an intriguing marine biology museum and aquarium.

Old meets new at the Centro Arqueológico Muralla de Santander. Here you can walk through ancient gates and parts of the city walls dating back to 1187. The attraction puts an interesting spin on the astonishing Plaza Porticada, flanked by neoclassical buildings.

The architectural patchwork is noticeable as you potter down to the Catedral de la Asunción – actually two connected churches. At the Iglesia del Santísimo Cristo, the oldest of the pair, glass floors reveal excavations

dating back to Roman times.

The simple interior is in stark contrast to the opulence of Palacio de la Magdalena, located at the highest point of Magdalena Peninsula. It was built between 1908 and 1912 as a royal summer residence and daily tours provide insight into the city's history.

Take some time out at El Sardinero, an elegant neighbourhood and beach, popular since the late 19th century when royal visitors started taking 'wave baths' on its gold-sand beaches, which are backed by the fragrant Piquío Gardens.

Be sure to catch one of the exhibits at new art hub Centro Botín, designed by Renzo Piano. It's an architectural marvel that hovers over the waterfront close to the cathedral.

The Mercado de la Esperanza is filled with fresh Cantabrian fish and an assortment of charcuterie, cheese, fruit and vegetables. Grab yourself a tin of local anchovies to take home.

### RESTAURANTS

#### *Asubio Gastobar*

From £31pp.

Calle Daoíz y Velarde, 23

#### *Bodega del Riojano*

From £31pp.

[bodegadelriojano.com](http://bodegadelriojano.com)

#### *Bodegas La Conveniente*

From £13pp.

Calle Gómez Oreña, 9

#### *Días Desur*

From £12.50pp.

[diasdesur.es](http://diasdesur.es)

#### *El Serbal*

From £41pp.

[elserbal.com](http://elserbal.com)

#### *La Cátedra*

From £13pp.

Calle del Medio, 5

### HOTELS

#### *Gran Hotel Sardinero*

Doubles from £77.

[hotelsardinero.es](http://hotelsardinero.es)

#### *Hotel Real*

Doubles from £74.

[eurostarshotels.co.uk](http://eurostarshotels.co.uk)

#### *Le Petit Boutique Hotel Santander*

Doubles from £50.

[lepetithotelsantander.com](http://lepetithotelsantander.com)

#### *Los Balcones del Arte*

Doubles from £66.

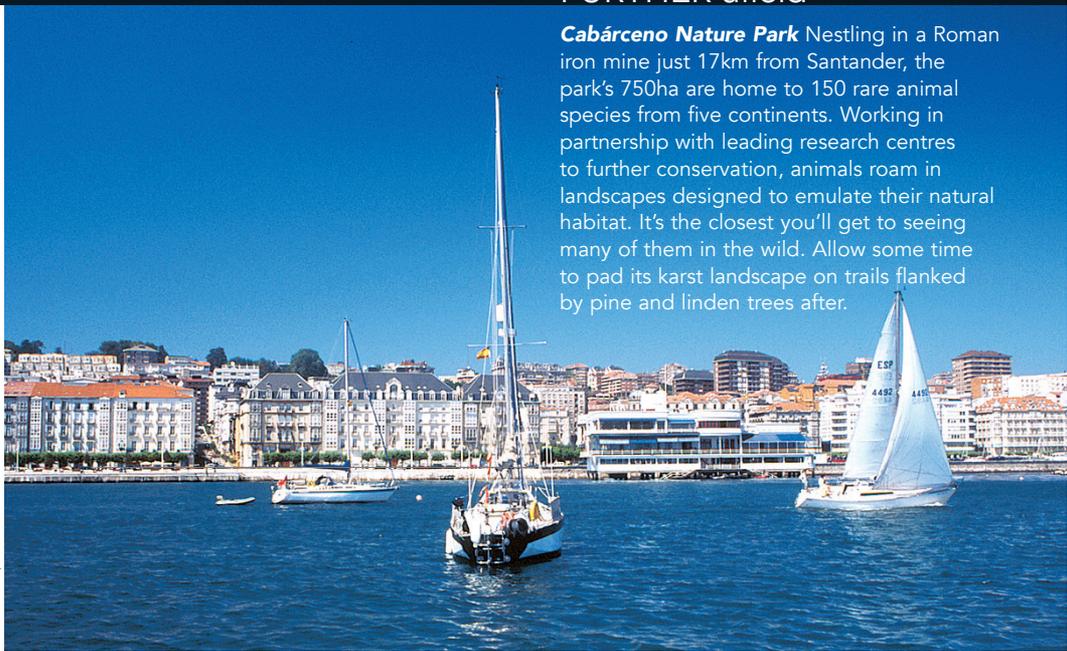
[losbalconesdelarte.com](http://losbalconesdelarte.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GRAB A BITE AT ONE OF THE MANY TAPAS BARS; OCTOPUS PINCHOS; BODEGA DEL RIOJANO INTERIORS; ANCHOVIES ARE A CANTABRIAN SPECIALITY; YACHTS DOT THE COAST; THE DRAMATIC MAGDALENA PENINSULA; MODERN CENTRO BOTÍN

## FURTHER afield

**Cabárceno Nature Park** Nestling in a Roman iron mine just 17km from Santander, the park's 750ha are home to 150 rare animal species from five continents. Working in partnership with leading research centres to further conservation, animals roam in landscapes designed to emulate their natural habitat. It's the closest you'll get to seeing many of them in the wild. Allow some time to pad its karst landscape on trails flanked by pine and linden trees after.



# 48hrs VITORIA-GASTEIZ

The Basque Country's forgotten gem is an inviting mix of old meets new just waiting to be discovered – pad the medieval streets of this hillside capital and marvel at its architecture, stopping for *pintxos* along the way

Often overshadowed by its coastal cousins, Vitoria-Gasteiz combines rich culture with a gentle pace of life that makes for an ideal city break. With an art scene to rival Bilbao, all the historic clout of San Sebastián and *pintxos* aplenty, you are guaranteed to bask in the glory of this assured city.

The best way to explore its almond-shape centre is to take to the streets and immerse yourself in the dramatic architecture of its medieval heart, Casco Viejo. Parts of the old fortified wall remain today, and within you'll find the gothic Santa María Cathedral looming over proceedings amid pretty town squares that rumble with activity.

Stop by the Plaza de la Virgen Blanca to discover the San Miguel church, which is home of the image of *White Madonna* – the city's patron saint – or head to Plaza del Matxete, where locals gather to frequent its many bars and cafés.

Eduardo Dato Street is a solid shopping option which is conveniently lined with *pintxos* bars. Grab a snack before visiting the nearby contemporary art museum, Artium.

Sprawled across the city are palaces of various periods that offer an authentic sense of place: Palacio de Augustin Zulueta and Palacio de Bendaña are fine examples. The former is home to the Museo de Bellas Artes, which is filled with Basque art from 1850-1950. The latter features Bibat, a museum whose sleek and modern copper-framed facade is as interesting as its collection.

There's no question when it comes to food: the best way to discover local gastronomy is at the Plaza de Abastos. Inside, you can try the likes of Idiazabal cheese alongside a glass of crisp txakoli. Round it off with a trip to La Peña Dulce, one of the most traditional bakeries in the city.

## Where to EAT AND STAY

### RESTAURANTS

#### *El Portalón*

From £32pp.

[restaurantelportalon.com](http://restaurantelportalon.com)

#### *PerretxiCo*

From £26pp.

[perretxico.es](http://perretxico.es)

#### *Restaurante Arkupe*

From £34pp.

[restaurantearkupe.com](http://restaurantearkupe.com)

#### *Restaurante La Regadera*

From £36pp.

[laregadera41.com](http://laregadera41.com)

#### *Sagartoki*

From £30pp.

[sagartoki.com](http://sagartoki.com)

#### *Toloño*

From £11pp.

[tolonobar.com](http://tolonobar.com)

#### *Zaldiaran*

From £58pp.

[restaurantezaldiaran.com](http://restaurantezaldiaran.com)

### HOTELS

#### *Abba Jazz*

Doubles from £56.

[abbajazzvitoriahotel.com](http://abbajazzvitoriahotel.com)

#### *La Casa de los Arquillos*

Doubles from £61.

[lacasadelosarquillos.com](http://lacasadelosarquillos.com)

#### *NH Canciller Ayala*

Doubles from £59.

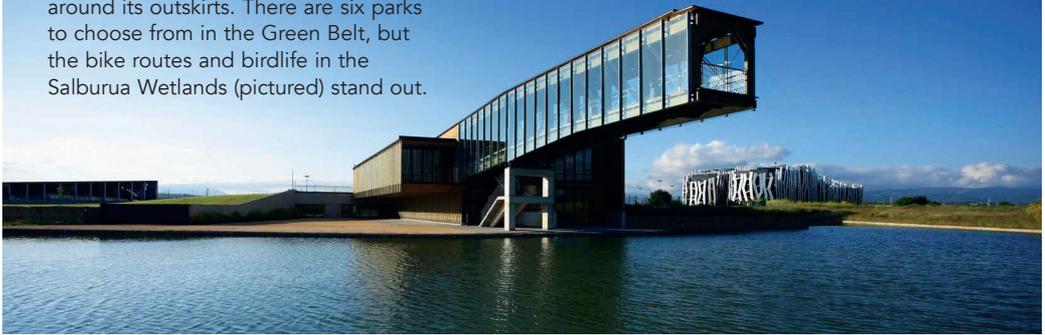
[nh-hotels.com](http://nh-hotels.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE ANNUAL FIESTA DE LA VIRGEN BLANCA IS THE CITY'S LARGEST; VISIT SANTA MARÍA CATHEDRAL; FIND INTERACTIVE ART IN THE SALBURUA WETLANDS, ON THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS; PLENTIFUL PINTXOS; SIGNATURE SWEETS; LOCAL IDIAZABAL CHEESE

## FURTHER afield

**The Green Belt** It will come as no surprise to learn that Vitoria-Gasteiz received the accolade European Green Capital in 2012 once you see the ethereal oak forests, picture-perfect meadows and inky blue lakes that slink around its outskirts. There are six parks to choose from in the Green Belt, but the bike routes and birdlife in the Salburua Wetlands (pictured) stand out.





# M A R K E T

Green Spain's larder is always fully stocked and the best way to discover what the locals are eating is

## CANTABRIA

### MARKETS

#### Mercado de la Esperanza

Shop where the locals do in the 'Market of Hope'. Find seafood on the ground floor and meat, cheese, fruit and orujo, the tipple from the region, upstairs. Tuesday-Saturday. *Santander*

#### Mercado del Este

The perfect place to gather all you need for a beach-side picnic. It has a top tapas bar and great-value regional wine offering. Monday-Sunday. *Santander*

#### Mercado de Potes

Visit this bustling market to pick up ingredients for the local dish *cocido lebaniego*. It also does a fine line in cheeses, honey and orujo. Monday. *Potes*

### FESTIVALS

#### Anchovy Festival

This event takes place in spring and autumn. It has top chefs competing for the best recipe using local anchovies. May, June and September. *Santoña*

#### Cocido Montañés Festival

The place to try the locals' most renowned pork dish, which is prepared in spectacular fashion en masse for those visiting. First Sunday of September. *Ucieda*

#### Feast of the Orujo

A celebration that pays tribute to the local speciality of orujo. Try the brandy-like spirit, made from the by-products of wine-making, which comes in a variety of flavours. November. *Potes*

### FOOD GLOSSARY

**Anchoas** Anchovies from the Cantabrian Sea, aged in barrels of salt, then packed in oil

**Boquerones** Fresh anchovies marinated in vinegar and olive oil

#### **Cocido lebaniego**

A chickpea-based stew

**Orujo** A grappa-like spirit made from grapes used for wine found in the Potes area

**Quesada** Cheesecake made with queso fresco (soft cheese), cinnamon and lemon

#### **Queso de nata**

Local soft cheese

**Sobao** The ubiquitous cake of the Valles Pasiegos is a dense sponge made of eggs, flour and butter

FROM LEFT: DELI STALL AT MERCADO DE LA ESPERANZA; TINNED FISH IS A CANTABRIAN SPECIALITY; RED SNAPPER; LA COLLADA SHEEP'S CHEESE; ASTURIAN NUTS; OYSTER SHUCKER IN VIGO; DRIED CHILLIS



# F O R C E

to immerse yourself in the scents and flavours at one of the fantastic local markets or food festivals

## GALICIA

### MARKETS

#### Mercado de Abastos

Surpassed in visitors only by the cathedral, Santiago's city market has over 70 stalls laden with cured meats, breads and cheeses. Monday-Saturday. *Santiago de Compostela*

#### Mercado de A Pedra

Fish restaurants and food stalls nestle side by side in this seafood-lover's mecca near the port. Raw oysters are sold by the half dozen or dozen and mussels and seafood platters abound. Daily. *Vigo*

#### Mercado de Padrón

A 30-minute drive from the capital, find the town's best-known export, the Padrón pepper. Sunday. *Padrón*

### FESTIVALS

#### Albariño Wine Festival

Raise a glass of Galicia's most famous white at this annual event, with talks and tastings. August. *Cambados*

#### Arzúa-Ulloa Cheese Festival

This lively event puts the soft white Arzúa-Ulloa cheese in the spotlight. March. *Arzúa*

#### O Carballiño Octopus Festival

Around 30,000 kilos of octopus are prepared in copper pots during this celebration of one of the region's favourite ingredients. August. *O Carballiño*

#### Padrón Pepper Festival

A celebration with a fiesta of floats, barbecues and tasting opportunities. First Saturday of August. *Herbón*

### FOOD GLOSSARY

#### Empanada gallega

Flat flaky pie stuffed with meat, fish or octopus

**Fina clam** Small, often eaten raw with lemon

**Percebes** A prized, claw-like barnacle best cooked simply in brine

#### Pimientos de Padrón

Small, green peppers usually fried and sprinkled with sea salt

**Pulpo á feira** Galician-style octopus lightly boiled then drizzled with olive oil and paprika

**Tetilla** A buttery cow's cheese of conical shape

#### Torta de Santiago

Moist almond and citrus-flavoured tart dating back to medieval time and decorated with the St James cross



## ASTURIAS

### MARKETS

#### **Mercado de Cangas de Onís**

The first record of this market dates from the Middle Ages. Today it offers a range of superb seafood pâtés, Asturian legumes, local hazelnuts and homemade jams. Sunday. *Cangas de Onís*

#### **Mercado de Grado**

As well as occasional specialist markets, throughout the year local farmers and artisans come here weekly to sell fruit and vegetables, cheese and sausages, sweets and honey. Sunday. *Grado*

#### **Mercado de Villaviciosa**

A weekly market held in the town known as the capital of apple cider. There's plenty of spritzly *sidra* available to try, as well as a range of bottles to take home. Wednesday. *Villaviciosa*

### FESTIVALS

#### **Gijón Cider Festival**

An intoxicating 30,000 litres of cider are brought to this annual event for visitors to taste. Late August. *Gijón*

#### **El Bollo**

Named after the fruit cake it celebrates. Easter. *Avilés*

#### **Fiestas de la Virgen del Carmen**

The patron saint of fishermen is celebrated every summer in the region's fishing villages, including Salinas, Luanco and Lastres. July. *Coastal villages*

#### **Feria de la Ascensión de Oviedo**

Taking place around Ascensión (40 days after Easter Sunday), this pays homage to rural life, with produce stalls, a livestock fair and craft. May. *Oviedo*

### FOOD GLOSSARY

#### **Avilés sausage**

Local charcuterie

**Cabrales** Blue cheese matured in caves

**Chosco de Tineo** A smoked pork sausage

**Empanada** Flat savoury pie with a thick crust filled with meat

**Eo Estuary oysters** Regional favourite of excellent quality

**Fabes** A white bean and the mainstay of the region's *fabada* stews

**Los Beyos** Semi-hard smoked cheese

**Tortos de maíz** Puffed up flatbread served with savoury elements

**Sidra** Cider made from local apples, with a low alcohol content (4-6%)

**Wild hazelnuts** Long and oval-shaped with thick shells

FROM LEFT: BONITO DEL NORTE IS A FAVOURITE; SEAFOOD APLenty IN ASTURIAS; SAMPLING JAMÓN IBÉRICO; BOCARTES FOR SALE; CANTABRIAN BUTTER; BAKED GOODS; HONGO MUSHROOMS; VEG PILED HIGH AT THE ORDIZIA MARKET IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY



## BASQUE COUNTRY

### MARKETS

#### Mercado de la Bretxa

In a huge Old Town building that hosts cinemas, boutiques and bars, farmers and fishermen sell their wares. Expect hake from Ondarrao, sea bream from Bermeo, baby eels and barnacles. Daily. *San Sebastián*

#### Gernika-Lumo Market

Over 100 producers gather to sell fruit, vegetables, cheese, flowers and more. Try Idiazabal cheese and Urdaibal txakoli wine. Monday and first Saturday of the month. *Gernika*

#### Mercado de la Ribera

Located in a vast, golden building in Bilbao, this is the largest covered food market in the world. You'll find plenty to stock the larder back home with. Daily. *Bilbao*

### FESTIVALS

#### Ardoaraba Taste Street

The capital of Álava province hosts this event of fine wine accompanied by imaginative pintxos, which make full use of the region's choice produce. First week of December. *Ardoaraba, Vitoria-Gasteiz*

#### Mercado de Ordizia

A convivial meeting place for both buyers and sellers of agricultural produce from the area. Sheltered by columned structures, browse a wide array of cheese, fruit and seasonal specialities. Wednesday. *Ordizia*

#### Tolosa Bean Festival

During this celebration of the *alubias de Tolosa*, bean stews are served from enormous vats along the town's street. November. *Tolosa*

### FOOD GLOSSARY

#### Albacore tuna

Eaten fresh or preserved, this is the best-established fish in the region

#### Bacalao

Salt cod

#### Gilda

Signature pintxo comprising anchovy fillet, chilli and olive on a stick

#### Gernika peppers

Green pepper from Bizkaia known for its intense, earthy flavour

#### Idiazabal

Nutty sheep's milk cheese often served with quince membrillo

#### Tolosa beans

A creamy, buttery red bean

#### Txakoli

Effervescent and very dry white wine with high acidity and low alcohol content

#### Txuleton

Basque steak taken from eight-year-old cows. The meat has a higher fat content, meaning richer flavour

Photos by Sarah Coghlin; Mowie Kay; Gary Latham; Basquetour; Asier Larraza; Saboreando Asturias; Tourist Board; José Ramón Navarro Tudela

**FOOD**  
*and*  
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