

Routes at the Merindades



Route 1

Following the footprints of our ancestors

Route 2

The strength of the river Ebro

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The origins of Castilla

Route 4

In search of the "Losino" horse

Route 5

In the shade of "La Peña"

Due to the great number of tourist resources both natural and cultural ones, we have ordered and unified the different points of interest, forming five routes, recommending them all if you want to learn more about our precious environment. These routes are worked out to be used by vehicle and to enjoy them during a long and complete journey, so you will have to think about filling your tank and look for a place to eat. Some of the path can be done on foot and we recommend suitable footwear. Its varied content will permit us to know more deeply the region and to enjoy its stunning landscapes, historical settings, rivers, valleys, castles, dolmens, villages, monasteries, forests, bridges, Romanesque churches, houses (or strongholds), natural spaces, traditions, causeways, cattle. The circular direction of the routes allows us to start and finish the course wherever we want. Those who are getting bored with some of the proposals or do not have enough time can omit several visits or use the shortcuts leaving the rest of the route for another day.

At each point we have worked out you will find an information board that explains you more about every place.

Along the path there are some sections where the road can be damaged and we recommend you to take it easy and to be calm or to abandon the planned visit. You should take care by the most visited crossroads and deviations. We do not offer visits to the inside of buildings because they are normally private places. The religious buildings can be visited during the hours of cult.

ROUTE 1- In the footsteps of our ancestors

This route will bring us to the most emblematic places of the area of "Las Merindades" such as Puente de Guareña, Ojo Guareña and the mountain dwellers' environment.

The route that leaves from **Villarcayo** takes us into the Nela Valley and the Cantabrian Range. After the journey of about 135 kilometres it will be difficult for us to forget the charm of the visited places.

In **Villarcayo** we will visit the Plaza Mayor (High Square), the area of "el Soto", the boasted houses of Santa Marina and the monastery of Santa Maria la Real de Vilena.

Salazar is a nice village known for its palaces, houses and towers. Apart of that, the popular architecture is worth to be mentioned.

We approach **Escaño** following a bad road (we can also take direction **Cigüenza**) to admire its slender Romanesque church.

In **Nela** we will be surprised by the wonderful natural scenery sculpted by the river. Next to the hermitage of **Sobrepeña** we find a marvellous panoramic.

The neighbours of **Quintanilla Valdebodres** have preserved the traditional architecture well. Then we have the waterfall of "La Mea".

The river Nela took thousands of years to perforate the limestone rock and to create the unique place called **Puente de Guareña**.

Above this impressive natural bridge we see a part of a farmhouse, a palace and a church.

On our way to Leva a stream flows into the beech trees and it is a nice place to enjoy.

The Velasco tower dominates the silhouette of **Cidad**.

An old dolmen can be found on our way to **Busnela**, an abandoned village next to the source of river Nela.

The Engaña tunnel communicated Burgos with "Valle del Pas in Cantabria, it is considered to be one of the longest tunnels of Europe, being nearly seven kilometres long.

Nowadays this deserted and ruined tunnel is the best sample of our forgotten lands.

Entrambosrios, alike so many small villages of Merindad de Sotocueva, is a good example of integration in the stock-farmer landscape.

Seeing this privileged surrounding we shouldn't forget **Ojo Guareña**. This complex of cavities, up to 100 kilometres long, is nowadays a protected natural space.

The hermitage of San Bernabe contains an important collection of original wall paintings. Beneath we find river Guareña, shaping caves and galleries, introducing itself into the heart of the complex.

Around the tower of the "Velasco" we find the strongholds of the village in Quisicedo. **Quintanilla del Rebollar** is one of those villages that has taken care of its buildings.

If the route is too long, we can go back to **Cornejo**, leaving in the rest of the course for another day. In Cornejo the dry riverbed of the "Trema" is bordered by solid houses.

From the road of Villarcayo, a split way will bring us to **Butrera**, its church is one of the regional Romanesque treasures

By the "Plaza de Sancho Grande" we find the town of **Espinosa de los Monteros**, it conserves interesting defensive buildings and residential and religious constructions. The castle of the Velasco or the Palace of the Chiloeches announce the wealth hidden behind its walls.

Las Machorras is the centre of a way of life, in danger of extinction, that life is based on cattle driving. We have to mention the feast of "las Nieves" on the fifth of august.

If there is some time left we recommend to ascend one of the mountain passes of the area, for example **Lunada**.

The landscape is simply marvellous: cottages, grasslands and woods are unique in this particular environment.

Going back to Villarcayo we can stop in **Gayangos** a little cattleman's place of Montija. The nearby lagoons are publicity for the lovers of birdlife.



ROUTE 2 – The force of the Ebro

The river Ebro is the most important creator of the contrasted landscape of the area. Its course and that of its tributaries have formed a large number of valleys, gorges, ravines and waterfalls. The human activity has also taken part in the modification of this surrounding with dolmens, hermitages, feudal houses, towers, Romanesque churches and picturesque villages.

Around the town square in **Soncillo** we see an urban set with its typical glazed corridors. On our way to the next point we pass by the caves of **Piscarciano** and some other interesting villages.

If we want to, we can walk to Palancas a narrow gorge next to **Landraves**.

From **Consortes** a nice place in the valley of Manzanedo we can enjoy an excellent panoramic.

San Miguel de Cornezuelo has only one street, its Romanesque church contains an exemplary wooden statue.

The magnificent hermitage of **Argés** is next to the road, on our way to **Valdivielso** we pass nearby the monastery of **Rioseco** where once existed an important monastery now in ruins and unapproachable. We will be impressed by the ravin of los Hocinos.

The church and tower of **Valdenoceda** are a simple “advance” of the treasures that await us in the monumental Valle de Valdivielso. From the view point of La Mazorra we contemplate the best view of the valley: little villages surrounded by fruit trees and forests watered by the river Ebro.

In **Ahedo de Butrón** we can visit an interesting popular complex and a beautiful Romanesque church. Before we reach **Porquera de Butrón** with its potato fields we will see the dolmen Cotorrita.

After descending the surprising mountain pass of La Eme we see **Pesquera de Ebro**, this artistic complex is situated in the canyons of the river Ebro.

Tudanca de Ebro is a rural village surrounded by a unique landscape and its popular taste is present when we walk along its streets.

The medieval bridge of **Villaneuva Rampalay** was crucial to save the rich Ebro pass. The road to **Báscones** is in bad condition. We can choose or **Ailanes** of **Arreba**. **Crespos** is a quite, harmonious village with a Romanesque church worth to be visited.

Now we will take M623 to **Cilleruelo de Bezana**. We can go back to **Soncillo** and leave the remaining route for another day.

Santa Gadea conserves a popular architecture so as the other nearby farmer villages, with features of the houses of Cantabria. The Hijedo mountain is near.

The two quarters of **Arija** are opposed. Next to the dam of the river Ebro we find large beaches of fine sand.

San Vicente de Villamezán stands out for its Romanesque church and hermitage.

Virtus has a farmhouse, a castle, a church and a covered bowling alley, one of the few left in Burgos. We pass by **Soncillo**. Nearby the lower quarter of **Villabáscones** is the waterfall of Las Pisas, its water falls in rain seasons and by snow break. We will have to walk a bit to discover this magical corner.



ROUTE 3 – The origins of Castile

Our journey takes us to places where we can revive the glorious past of this area, bound to the birth of the county of Castile. You should not forget to visit the monastery of Oña nor the medieval city of **Frias**. The little villages of **Valdivielso** valley and **Tobalina**. Next to **Trespaderne** here are some deposits and the river Ebro forms a spectacular landscape all along the trail.



We start in **Trespaderne** where some discoveries were made in the castle of Tedeja and the necropolis of Peña, it is said that this discovery can change the content of the history books.

The road to **Nofuentes** brings us along Mijangos, a medieval setting where we can admire the architecture. In the steep ravine of La Horadada we find the necropolis of Peña and the hermit of **Tartalés de Cilla**.

The dam of **Cereceda** is the natural entrance to the **Valley of Valdivielso**: Sometimes the access to **Tartalés de los Montes** is cut off because of landslip. Its waterfall is impressive.

Then comes **Arroyo** a good example of both popular and feudal architecture. Among the medieval streets of the capital of the Valley called **Quecedo** we enjoy the harmony of its palaces, popular houses and strongholds. The interesting rural village Puentearenas stands out most of all for its Romanesque jewel San Pedro de Tejada characterized for its unity of style and its good conservation.

The towers of **Quintana** are surrounded by the popular houses of the valley.

In **Almiñé** the old roadway that ascended the high and passed along its Romanesque church is surrounded by solid strongholds.

In the narrow steep streets of **Condado** the trail through Valle de Valdivielso comes to an end.

Then we pass the gorge of Oca arriving to the county villa of **Oña**. San Salvador monastery is an obligated point to visit for those who want to regress till the origins of Castilla.

We are some kilometres separated from a spectacular landscape: the waterfall "Molinar" in **Tobera**. There is also a hermitage, a bridge and a Calvary.

You must stop at the Castle of the Velasco and visit the San Vicente church, a silhouette you can distinguish when you approach the medieval town of **Frias**. Its narrow streets and magnificent houses will offer you some shadow and rest.

The medieval bridge that stands above the river Ebro dominated once the entrance to one of the most beautiful places of Spain. If the route becomes too long we can leave the rest for another day.

Valderrama is the capital of **Partido de la Sierra in Tobalina**.

Montejo de San Miguel is a pleasing popular village.

The new hermitage of San Roque, its church and tower in **Quintana Martin Galindez** (capital of the Valley of Tobalina) are outstanding.

A visit to **Herrán** will show you a roadway that went parallel to the road of Pirron and communicated the Valle de Tobalina with that of Valderejo in Alava.

In **Hedeso** there is a beautiful and friendly **Casa Rural**, called **Casa La Sonrisa**. For a pleasant stay during the night and also offers meals.

In a pine wood next to **Quintana Maria** we discover several late medieval burial places excavated into the rocks.

Cillaperlata, a village at the riverside of the river Ebro has remains of an historical past. Now we will go back to **Trespaderne** passing again along the necropolis of Peña.

ROUTE 4 – In search of the horse Losino

Today we depart from the town **Medina de Pomar** and we cover 160 kilometres. We will be able to see different places of artistic and natural interest: excellent examples of Romanesque art, spectacular waterfalls, legacies of roman civilization, fresh beech trees, marvellous examples of popular architecture and other places of historical interest.

If we are lucky we will see a specimen of the threatened horse of Losa. Medina de Pomar is an excellent example of an artistic complex, its silhouette is visible thanks to the emblematic citadel of “los Condestables”, nowadays transformed into the “museum of Merindades” When we walk along its narrow streets we will discover the Townhall, the “Santa Cruz” church and the monastery of Santa Clara. In the inner-city we observe an important number of houses with noble elements.



Torres is special for its farmhouse and church.

La Cerca conserves an antique church with Romanesque apse and the old Palace of the Hierro Salinas and there are also many big houses. **Salinas del Rosio** is an antique roman villa known for the exploitation of its salt mines and its popular houses.

If we want to walk a little bit more we can visit the curious wolf path of **Perex**.

In **San Pantaleón de Losa** we will be attracted by the strategic position of its Romanesque hermitage set on the top of a crag having the shape of a ship. **San Martín de Losa** is an agrarian district next to the ruins of a forgotten roman city.

Fresno, the centre of the valley of Losa and surrounded by potato crop stands out for its covered bowling alley. **Villalba de Losa** birthplace of the founder of Buenos Aires, Juan de Garay, conserves a part of its town wall.

In the middle of the beech forest of “**Monte de Santiago**”, declared natural monument, we find Fuente Santiago. From there we can walk until the spectacular waterfall of river Nervion, you're unlikely to see this waterfall because it remains dry for several months a year. We pass by the interesting tower **Berberana** and we go into the province of Alava.

We reach **Valpuesta** antique diocese that still maintains its collegiate church and its nearby residential and defensive constructions.

The narrow streets of the rural village **San Zadornil** lead us to a Romanesque church. Very close to the interpretation centre of the Natural Park of Valderego in Alava. A short halt in **Quintanilla de Ojeda** is good to contemplate its medieval bridge.

Criales is a very beautiful set surrounded by an extensive pine wood. In Jerea we find another slender bridge. The course is very long so we can go back to **Medina de Pomar** and leave the rest of the journey for another day. If we follow our trip, we pass along a narrow mountain pass formed by the river Jerea, this river forms a waterfall not very far from **Pedrosa de Tobalina**.

In **Cadiñanos** we will feel sad watching the ruins of the huge Medina Rosales Palace.

In **Nofuentes**, capital of Merindad de Cuesta Urria we can admire the emblematic Santa Maria de Rua monastery. In **Ceboleros** we are surprised by the castle of “The Caves”, las cuevas, this original construction was build at the end of the XXth century in round stones.

Last proposal: The **Almendras** church with its interesting Romanesque porch.

ROUTE 5 – At the shadow of the rock

During this amazing journey we can see how the green landscape that characterizes “**Valle de Mena**” contrasts against the ochre tones that dominate “**Valle de Losa**”. Along the 145 kilometres we will be the witnesses of the harmony among the small villages and their environment.

Waterfalls, houses, towers and Romanesque churches complete the view.

We start in **Villasana de Mena**, there the streets of the inner-city are notorious, we can localize the monastery of Santa Ana, the palace of Sancho Ortiz de Matienza and the tower of the Velasco. We begin our journey visiting the lordly complex of Artieta.

We go into Alava before we start the assault on the mountain pass “Peña Angulo”. From **Cozuela** a short wall will bring us to an idyllic surrounding next to “San Peñaladros”.

From the old road of the mountain pass of Peña Angulo we have a beautiful panoramic view.

Quincoces de Yuso is the capital of “Valle de Losa” and it preserves in its inner-city a tower, several houses and a solid bridge.

The road leading to **Relloso** is in very bad condition, we recommend only the “ascent” to those who want to walk to the tunnel of “La complacera” and the “Pico del Fraile” (mountain top)

The ruins of a tower stick out in **Castrobarito**.

The church of **Colina** is important for its Romanesque art.

In **Tabliega** we will discover another example of Romanesque art. After our visit to the Romanesque church of **Bercedo** we go back to Valle de Mena.

When we descend the mountain pass of “el Cabrio” and we arrive to **Irús**. The Romans passed here on their roadway many centuries ago.

We will be very careful at the crossroad that ascends the Sanctuary of **Cantonad**, a very valued place for the inhabitants of Mena.

Before we arrive to the medieval tower of Lezana we pass by some other interesting places like **Vivanco** and **Concejero**.

River Cadagua selected a privileged natural environment to begin its voyage to the Cantabrian sea. In the shadow of the mountains of “la Peña” we find the church of Santa Maria de Siones, a real jewel of Romanesque art in an exceptional landscape.

There are some indications that a second road of Santiago passed by **San Lorenzo de Vallejo** where we can admire another provincial Romanesque.

If we are tired having made a long trip we can go from here to **Villasana** and leave the rest of the course for another day. Valle de Mena is surrounded by its typical landscape with grasslands and forests, **Villasuso** offers a good example of traditional architecture.

A document about the foundation of the old monastery of Taranco, of year 800, shows for the first time the Castille. We will pass by **Caniego** and see Hornes or **Ribota**. Before finishing the route we can climb the marsh of Ordunte.

