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The English Way**

Interview with Manuel F. Rodríguez: The present and the future of The English Way



Manuel F. Rodríguez is a journalist and a researcher. Recently he won the International Prize Aymeric Picaud and his life is a good example of dedication to the Camino de Santiago: from his intellectual production, his work on the Xacobeo of the Xunta de Galicia -especially linked to the Pilgrim Associations- and as a pilgrim himself. In recent years he has devoted particular attention to the English Way, about which we wanted to talk to him.

- Why the English Way, when and why did you decide to study it?

This happened in the nineties. When I was writing of a guide of the English Way for S.A. of Xestión do Plan Xacobeo, where I work, I discovered the relevance of this route. I found it fascinating to think of the thousands and thousands of medieval pilgrims travelling by sea from British ports and from northern Europe and France. Later we will publish some articles about it.

-The current certification of the Compostela is of such importance

that it can create almost unfair situations, so that for years this route of the Way, starting from the city of A Coruña, did not achieve the popularity it deserves because it did not reach the 100 kilometers that were stipulated before a credential was awarded. Luckily, this problem has been recently resolved. Can you tell us something about this situation?

In 2016, the Cathedral of Santiago and Tourism of A Coruña suggested that I write a particular report in order to study the possibility of granting the 'credential' to pilgrims travelling from that town; in so much as it seemed unfair that pilgrims should be denied recognition for having travelled that route, simply on the grounds that it was less than 100 kilometres long. Thanks to this report and to the contributions of the Coruña Town Council and the Cathedral Chapter, an addendum was published in December 2016. It was a great step forward. But I think that the imposed condition – of having already done a St. James way before arriving in the Coruña region- should be eliminated.

A Coruña was the great port of reception for pilgrims, a great distance from any other, such as Ferrol, Betanzos, Noia, etc. This evidence, confirmed by the documentation, should be more than enough. It would be an act of historical justice.

-The weight of the old pilgrimages on the English Way is huge, can you tell us something about your past? Do you think there are still things to discover or investigate?

It is amazing to think that from remote medieval Iceland pilgrims embarked for Santiago. It is a revealing example of the dimension of this phenomenon. During the early Middle Ages until the late sixteenth century, sea-going pilgrims were common, except during periods of war, political conflicts and epidemics. Although even under those conditions some pilgrims still arrived. But there is still a lot to research. It's an exciting task for young historians.

Those who are keen to conduct this research will have to address themselves to England, France, Germany, Ireland, etc., because it is in those countries where the bulk of the documentation is preserved. The first publication that discovered the relevance of the Jacobean maritime pilgrimage, and which confirms Coruña as the great European port of pilgrims, is that of the British historian Constance Mary Storrs. This admirable work dates from the nineteen sixties and has never been surpassed. Storrs, by the way, deserves to have a street named after her in A Coruña.

-For many pilgrims The English Way is an opportunity to experience a very special pilgrimage- first by sea by sea and then continuing afterwards on foot. We have both known members of maritime pilgrimages in the past ... Do you think it will be possible to advance in this field?

I am a fervent defender of the aim of recovering the pilgrimage by sea. But with a minimum of historical rigor and respect for its identity. The Camino de Santiago lives from its identity. If little by little, as is happening in some cases, we ignore it or directly betray it, we are making a big mistake. We must be properly respectful of the enormous value of the Way. There are

certain recent proposals that I, personally, do not like. Can it be considered a maritime pilgrimage if one travels some miles by boat and then finishes up with a very short walking tour from the Monte do Gozo, which is on the French Way, and not on the English Way?

-The English Way as a land route allows many pilgrims to experience the pilgrimage even if they do not have many days at their disposal, because the two routes require only between 3 and 5 stages to reach Compostela. Do you think that the English Way could be a good route to start on the pilgrimage to Santiago?

I can speak from my own experience. In 2017, I made a special study on A Coruña as a Jacobean city. It was exciting. It was the confirmation of what I already knew in a less detailed way: that this city was the great historic port for pilgrims. Well, I celebrated its publication by doing the English Way on foot from A Coruña. I did it accompanied by a neighbor and one of my daughters. It took us three days and amounted to 75 km. We arrived, full of excitement in Santiago.

We felt that in some way we were following in the footsteps of the old English, Irish pilgrims, etc. But, of course, we documented each Jacobean spot on the route, each temple or space which had had some significance for the pilgrims of the past, etc. That was why the experience was so enriching. I say it again and again: the DNA of the Camino are long distances, its European dimension. But in this case the English Way by land from A Coruña was always that, 75 km, no more. We knew it and we were respectful towards it. And somehow that respect rewarded us

-I am very interested in your experience as a pilgrim, a specialist who experiences at first -hand what he has studied ... Is there any monument or aspect of the Way that you think should be revalued or reintegrated into the current layout?

I can add to what I said previously. It is essential to bring to the surface the Jacobean sense of the Way. And not only of the English Way. The Camino de Santiago is being increasingly imitated as a successful experience in half the world. Many centers of Christian pilgrimage and other religions and cultures are generating routes in imitation of the Way. They even copy resources such as the pilgrim's credential, the Compostela, the sense of the most authentic hostels, etc. Therefore, the Jacobean being routes of greater specific historical weight, and among them is undoubtedly the English Way, need to be re-enforced and their identity underlined, which is of an amazing singularity. If not, little by little the most valuable pilgrim, both Spanish and foreigner, whether driven by religious or spiritual motivation or not, will lose the reference that the great historical world pilgrimage route is the Camino de Santiago, that the first official European Cultural Itinerary is the Camino de Santiago.

It pains me that this essential question should have been neglected.

-An aspect highly valued by pilgrims who travel the English Way is that it is a little traveled route and one in which the local population is closely connected with the pilgrims. Some say that there you can live the experience of the pilgrimage as in the French Way 30 years ago ... What was your experience as a pilgrim in this regard?

I have not made this route from Ferrol, its other official point of departure as an overland itinerary. From my experience doing it from A Coruña I can confirm that it is a little traveled route, although it has grown since the Compostela was granted. It is true that the people you meet are kind. I remember a man running after us for several meters to warn us that we were going off route. We made efforts not to get lost in certain places because in 2017 the signposting was poor, and even then we got lost three times. And there would have been a fourth, had it not been for the generosity of that man. I also remember the great hospitality of a private hostel in Sigüeiro. But I dare not say that the English Way is like the French thirty years ago. Maybe, and maybe not.



Pilgrims

Holly & Jeff. USA. 2018

In 2011 Holly and Jeff found 'The Way' through Netflix. At that time, Jeff had heard something about the Camino, but Holly did not know anything. After seeing the film, they both knew that they wanted to go to Spain to walk the Camino, and immediately began to gather information.

While they were learning and preparing, they shared their dream with a friend from California who was so inspired she walked the entire Camino Frances to Santiago with her daughter. Holly and Jeff longingly followed their friend's blog – hoping that would be happening for them soon. They began to meet more people who were planning their Camino experience, which made them even more motivated and excited. But, it always seemed impossible to find an entire month of vacation time to walk the Camino. At one point during these years, they actually planned to go, but then their trip was postponed unexpectedly. They became more and more involved in Camino groups online through blogs and Facebook. In 2015 they associated with The American Pilgrims on The Camino organization - and together with other local pilgrims past and present, created a new "chapter" in their state.

The Way was always on their mind. In fact, they came to understand

that the Way is truly in the mind first and foremost, not the body – and to successfully complete a Camino, the power is in your mind.

Holly and Jeff kept learning and planning. The Camino became an obsession with them, but they never had enough free time in order to make it happen. Finally this year, Holly decided that she did not want to wait any longer. Somehow, they must make walking their Camino happen. A friend of hers was dying, and she found herself thinking: "This life is very short. We are all going to die. We never know how much time we have, or what might happen that could prevent us from doing what we have always dreamed of doing. Jeff and I cannot continue postponing our Camino dream!" Once they were determined to make their Camino happen, the possibility opened: through news shared on the American Pilgrims' Facebook, Holly learned about the existence of the English Way (Camino Ingles), which is a complete yet shorter route that could be traveled in just 5 or 6 days, and still qualified them for a Compostela! Once they set aside the idea of doing the Frances, and embraced the Ingles, everything began to fall into place! This was just the first of many "miracles of the Camino" for them.

From that moment on, everything seemed miraculous. Despite having decided to go a new Way with very little time, they always found what they were looking for: a group that could help them organize their trip, dates, airports, lodging, gear, and

affordable prices ... Everything was being made possible! Of course, their group in America also helped them a lot because they knew how much Holly and Jeff both wanted to do the Camino and all of the complications they had faced. This group loaned gear, gave tips, and even held a special Shell Ceremony before Holly and Jeff departed.

On October 8, 2019 they arrived early to the airport, happily awaiting departure. About 30 minutes later, Jeff received a shocking voice message on his phone. A computerized voice told him that one of their flight connections had been inexplicably cancelled and they had been rescheduled for the next day! This was a disaster. There were multiple flight connections on other airlines, and hotel reservations that could not be changed! Rushing to the nearest airline desk begging for help, they were given the last two seats on a flight that was departing in 10 minutes. That flight would take them to a city with a connecting flight that could get them to Spain in time! It was a Camino miracle!

All of their experiences were very positive in Spain, beginning with their first encounter with a taxi driver who took them from their airport to their hotel. As they walked from Ferrol to Santiago they did not meet very many pilgrims, but the few they found were delightful, and from many different backgrounds. A young couple from Italy, a family from Spain with young children, a group of men from the Canary Islands celebrating retirement, a family from Colorado, and two women from Israel. It was a wonderful Way. They lived each



moment as an experience of peace and enjoyment of being together.

Despite the many yellow markers, they remember getting lost more than once! Sometimes they missed a signpost, and the scarcity of other pilgrims made it more complicated. But still, it was not a major problem because they always found help – often from local people. On their first day they wandered until after dark and could not locate the hotel where they had a reservation. They had decided originally to walk without the use of electronics, but on this evening they realized they needed to turn on the smartphone and use Google! Once they found a phone number and called the hotel, the staff immediately sent someone by car to find and rescue them, and bring them safely to their lodging! Although it wasn't the hotel's fault, the staff felt so badly their guests had gotten lost that they brought out plates of food and chocolates, and moved them to the most expensive room in the house without charging them any extra!

Holly and Jeff experienced many such kindnesses. On the first day, Holly remembers experiencing some knee pain and had stopped to rest on a bridge. A woman driving across the bridge noticed, turned her car around,

and came all the way back to see what was wrong and if she could offer help. They reassured the Good Samaritan that they would be alright and marveled all day as they walked about the kindness of that stranger. Later that same day, they stopped in the tourism office of a small city, and there was the same woman who had been in the car on the bridge! She happened to work in that little office! What a happy circumstance! The woman felt blessed to know that they were alright, and Holly and Jeff felt blessed they could thank her for her kindness. On another occasion, Jeff accidentally left his water bottle at a bar where they had stopped at for lunch. He did not notice until it was too late to go back, and he was feeling very thirsty. He needed water soon, and there were no services nearby! Suddenly, they discovered on the trail in front of them that some kind soul had arranged a cooler filled with ice and water bottles. A sign in Spanish read "donation bar".

Holly and Jeff believe that what they found in their Camino experience was exactly what they were looking for, and much more. The Way was incredibly beautiful, and everyone they met was very kind! Every day whether they got lost or asked for something, people always helped and made themselves available for them. Whether they attempted to speak Spanish, or used their own language, they always received a kind response! The relationship with the people was really incredible. For example, if they came to a town and asked for a hotel or a grocery store or bar, people would explain directions to them, search their cell

phones to find directions, or even take the time to walk with them to the location.

Holly and Jeff believe that they have lived through an important experience that will forever be life changing. Walking a short Camino had its positive side. The relationship with the people of the Camino was very special, probably as it was on the French Way many years ago. They felt so good and so grateful that they made certain to stop in all places possible to contribute in some way to those people. Whenever they could, they would take or buy something.

The only negative memory is the presence of garbage on the Camino, carelessly tossed by some of the pilgrims: water bottles, beer and soda cans, plastic bags, candy wrappers, socks and other items of discarded clothing. This was very upsetting to both of them since they feel that the Camino is a sacred pilgrimage and treasured place that should be taken care of. So, on the second day, Holly took a large bag and dedicated herself to picking up the trash she found along the way. Jeff joined her in the effort, and they spent a lot of extra time during each day cleaning the Camino as they walked. They thought about what a difference it would make if every pilgrim would wait to find a trash bin to place any of their garbage. They hope that other pilgrims will pick up any trash they see, in order to keep the Camino a clean and beautiful place for everyone coming behind.

As for the rest of their journey, the little problems like getting lost on the

Camino were positive, providing them with a unique adventure, fun memories, and lessons in trust. They always found solutions and experienced both large and small miracles.

On their third day, Holly and Jeff left their hotel very early while it was still dark. They enjoyed watching a beautiful sunrise. Following their guidebook, they made a mistake and took wrong turn somehow that sent them walking in a large circle. Without knowing where they were, they found some locals who pointed back to the way they had already come. Just as they were going to try another path (which would have taken them farther away from the Camino) they found some other pilgrims they could walk the correct direct with - enjoying some wonderful conversation and camaraderie throughout the morning!

On their final day when they left Sigüeiro to reach Santiago, a wrong turn happened again! This time, they were on an old Camino route which led them into a forest that no longer contained any Way markers. This is how they discovered that their guide book was not up-to-date! However, by that time they had already walked over one hour, so they decided instead of backtracking they would keep walking, hoping to find an old marker. After walking another two hours in a rain storm, up a steep and desolate path, they reached a fork in the road.

The book did not say anything about this junction, so they wondered what they should do. Having wandered for

so long, and feeling very tired, they did not want to make another mistake! During all of the house they spent walking that day without seeing even one person. So, the only one they could turn to was God.

Jeff offered a prayer, asking that they would know which way to turn. Just moments after saying "Amen" a jeep appeared on the road, coming from the middle of nowhere! They hailed it, and the driver indicated how to continue to reach Santiago. For them, this was the most incredible miracle on their Camino - a direct and immediate answer from God. The man in the jeep was like seeing a true Angel on the Camino! They have many memories like this, inexplicable things that happened, teaching that you should not worry in life, just believe that God is with you, and something positive will always happen.

When they finally arrived at the Cathedral in Santiago, Holly and Jeff were both very moved. Despite not being Catholic, Holly was surprised to find herself weeping, and Jeff also felt tremendous emotion, excitement and joy. Their experience was just that: very emotional. By the grace of God, their long-time dream had come true. On the Cathedral plaza they met up with other pilgrims they had seen along their journey, they took photos together and went to receive their Compostela. Holly and Jeff both agree that walking the Way felt like "coming home". Without any hesitation, they are planning to return.



The English Way



A Little History

The importance of pilgrimages by sea is unquestionable, some specialists like Lacarra even maintained that the sea was the oldest route of pilgrimage, since it was by the maritime route that the news of the discovery of the tomb of Santiago spread to the Carolingian world.

The pilgrims who came to the ports of northern Galicia were of many nationalities - English, Irish, Flemish, Scandinavian or Hanseatic - but it was the English who left the most indelible footprint, as is indicated by the fact the Way that connects the sea with the city of Compostela is known as the English Way.

Pilgrimages by sea to Compostela have been documented since the 12th century, specifically since 1147, when a company of English, German and Flemish crusaders visited the city and basilica of Santiago. The Crusaders went to the Holy Land but also to Lisbon, in whose conquest they participated by helping the first king of Portugal to liberate the city from Arab occupation. So that in 1255 Lisbon would become the capital of Portugal.

The research of specialists such as Constance Storrs allow us to know better how these pilgrimages developed. Thus, her work on an important pilgrimage that set sail from Dartmouth in the twelfth century, is a prime example of how pilgrims on their way to Santiago sometimes made stopovers in other ports to visit other pilgrimage shrines, in this case San Salvador of Oviedo.

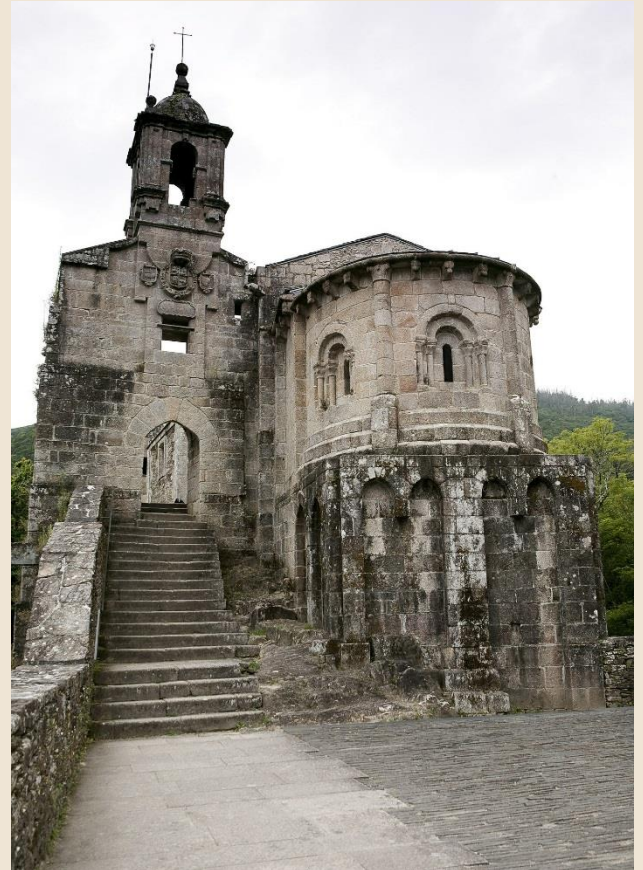
From these researches we know that most of the pilgrim ships disembarked in A Coruña and Ferrol, the two most important ports in the north of Galicia and those referred to the most in the pilgrims' accounts. Padrón was also important for some centuries, since it depended on a small port on the banks of the Sar built in time of the archbishop Diego Gelmírez, but in the XVII century it ceased to be viable when the estuary fell into disuse. Currently, the ports of A Coruña and Ferrol continue to receive pilgrim ships and have become the two starting points of the English Way itinerary.

Although the importance of pilgrimages to the ports of northern Galicia is well documented, the absence of systematic records prevents us from knowing the proportions reached.

For that reason, historians such as Ilja Mieck have pointed out that the information we have allows us to know that in the XV Century, at least 8,000 pilgrims disembarked at the ports of A Coruña and Ferrol, but it is still unknown whether this figure constitutes a more or less representative part of a total that could, in theory, exceed 35,000.

The truth is that maritime pilgrimages developed a great deal, particularly during the late Middle Ages, when the wars between France and England made pilgrimage by sea a lot safer than by land routes. This point is borne out by the testimony of the pilgrim Willian Wey, who in 1456, claimed to have found 84 ships from all the northern nations in the port of A Coruña.

In the sixteenth century maritime pilgrimages to Santiago fell into serious decline, owing to the birth of Protestantism and, particularly, the Anglican Church. But in recent decades the revival of the Camino de Santiago has led to numerous pilgrimages by boat to the ports of A Coruña and Ferrol and, consequently also the land routes that have their starting points in both towns.



The English Way

Itineraries, distances, stages...

The English Way takes its name from the fact that many Englishmen who in the past centuries made their pilgrimage to Santiago by sea, would mostly disembark in the ports of A Coruña or Ferrol and then continue on foot to the city of Compostela.

For this reason, it is a long journey for those who decide to start out by sea from another country, but a relatively short one when travelling by land:- 74 k from A Coruña and 118km from Ferrol-, and leaving from both cities the pilgrim will be eligible for the 'Compostela'. Of

course, the pilgrim who travels by bike or on horseback needs to travel 200km to be eligible for the document of the cathedral, and must therefore opt for another of the routes of the Camino de Santiago.

The brevity of the land route allows one to choose between leaving from A Coruña with its 3 stages, or from Ferrol in 4 or 5 stages. All of which makes the English Way a highly recommended route for those who have a only few days to do it or those who maybe do not wish to undertake a Camino which is too demanding.

In addition, it is an option that not too many people choose and one which therefore allows the pilgrim who travels it to be with others and to experience this life in common with people of different nationalities and different walks of life, but, at the same time, it also has its own inner, spiritual dimension, so that one can enjoy silence and reflection if one wishes.





The natural origins of the two land routes are the ports of A Coruña and Ferrol, but because of the relative brevity of the route it has been deemed necessary to include a short visit to the town for those who wish to obtain the 'Compostela', and this means taking as one's starting point the parish church of Santiago in A Coruña.

The two alternative routes, one from Ferrol and one from A Coruña, run separately until they meet up at the town of Bruma. From then on, there is just one single route 40 kilometers long as far as Santiago. From Ferrol, the distance to Bruma is usually traveled along 3 stages that run through Xubia, Fene, Cabanas,

Pontedeume, Miño, Betanzos and Leiro; while the route from A Coruña reaches Bruma and the end of a single stage that crosses the towns of Cambre and Carral.

From Bruma the English Way is normally done in 2 stages- crossing the territory of Sigüeiro and entering Santiago through A Barciela.

Recently, associations of pilgrims from other countries have begun to recover land routes in their own countries would have taken the pilgrims to the ports of embarkation for Santiago de Compostela.

The pioneering project is the one undertaken by the Confraternity of St. James of England (www.csj.org.uk), which has recovered a land route that departed from the abbey of Santiago in the town of Reading - the most important Jacobean cult center in this country- from where the pilgrims would have travelled to the main ports of the south.

But also the Camino Society of Ireland (www.caminosociety.com) proposes various itineraries in its territory under the name of The Celtic Way, stages to walk through Mayo, Dublin, Kerry, Cork... with particular places historically linked to Santiago such as the churches of St. James in Dublin and Dingle, and the possibility of embarking from different ports towards Galicia.

Ports / Starting points



Ferrol

Ferrol must have been one of the busiest ports in Galicia during the golden centuries of maritime pilgrimages: that is to say, between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. This port, together with that of A Coruña was the main destination for the ships carrying pilgrims from the Northern countries - Scandinavia, the British Isles or the Netherlands - which turned it into one of the two starting points of the English Way on Spanish soil. Thus, the pilgrim who arrives in Ferrol by sea or who simply decides to walk to Santiago from that town, will be able to walk the route of the English Way for 118 km. and obtain his Compostela when he arrives in Santiago.

But the port of Ferrol would also have received ships with pilgrims

from other ports in France and northern Spain during the ongoing wars and conflicts, such as the Hundred Years War, when pilgrimage by land was more dangerous and more difficult than travelling by sea.

The history of Ferrol is linked to the sea- its beginning and development depended on its being a safe haven on a sheltered estuary. This commercial and military link with the sea, led to the fact that in 1726 it became the naval base destined to control the maritime interests of Spain. From that moment, the town went through a period of expansion that made it the one we can visit today: a town that is the fruit of the Enlightenment, urbanism and architecture of the 18th century.

However, the history of Ferrol dates from a considerably earlier period; for records exist of a settlement bearing that name from 1087, the date of a document of donation which is kept at the nearby monastery of San Martín de Jubia. There was then a medieval Ferrol, whose traces can be seen in the current district of Ferrol Vello, where the traditional architecture of the Galician fishing villages- old houses with wooden balconies and houses with galleries dating from the nineteenth century-co-exist alongside some remains of the powerful noble houses that once held sway- the counts of Traba in the XI-XIII centuries and those of Andrade in the XIV-XV centuries.

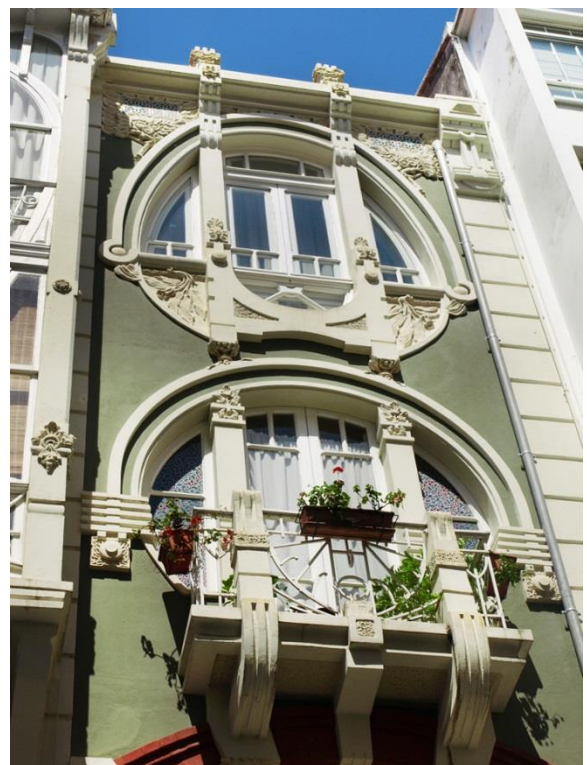
The large maritime facilities, the port and its defenses- date from the eighteenth century. Its construction was the fruit of two brilliant ministers: Patiño and the Marqués da Ensenada and entailed the creation of the two new neighborhoods of Esteiro and Magdalena with which enlightened town planning was first introduced into Galicia. The neighborhood of La Magdalena was conceived as a residential area, where high officials, high ranking officers and merchants were housed and which, due to its heritage value, was declared a Historic-Artistic Site. Esteiro was created to house the workers who were employed in the new shipyards and port facilities. Its original layout consisted of six parallel streets.

Because of its location, the port of Ferrol was always considered as very safe, one of the safest in the world, as Juan de Molina said in his description of Galicia of 1550, but that did not prevent it from continuing to be an important military objective and that, periodically, it suffered attacks and attempts at conquest, most famous of all being carried out by the British Navy in 1800, when it landed on the nearby beach of Doniños.

For all this, Ferrol always needed important strong defenses. Some of them were built during the time of Philip II, around 1577, such as the forts of San Martín, San Felipe and La Palma - these last two still guard the estuary and only be reached by sea. Later, around 1750, an impressive military complex designed by the military engineer and architect Julián Sánchez Bort

Was built, of which there are still numerous remains that are well worth visiting: such as its monumental walled enclosure of which the "Baluarte del Infante", "the" Baluarte de San Juan "and some remains of the" Baluarte de Canido ".

Currently Ferrol has almost 70,000 inhabitants and is a modern city full of life and new artistic and cultural projects. These include the programming of its magnificent Jofre Theater -which is also worth visiting for its nineteenth-century modernist architecture, a modern auditorium and then to urban or street art projects such as Las Meninas de Canido. Modern Ferrol still lives with its past and its traditions. During the Holy Week the processions of Ferrol are among the celebrated in Galicia, which is not to mention the museums and archives linked to its long naval traditions.



Ports / Starting Points

A Coruña

Located on a small peninsula in the northwest of Galicia, A Coruña has its origins in pre-Roman times, as the remains of the Castro de Elviña eloquently testify. But, and above all, it is magnificent lighthouse known as The Tower of Hercules which stands as a symbol of the Roman presence in Coruña. It has been a trade centre and the main port of arrival of sea going pilgrimages for centuries. A Coruña and its port were refounded in 1208 by Alfonso IX, from which time it has gradually developed to become what it is today- a large town with almost 250,000 inhabitants, with flourishing industrial activity and a vibrant cultural and tourist centre.

In A Coruña the beaches that surround the bay -Riazor, Orzán and Matadero- harmoniously co-exist with the most traditional neighborhoods, such as the Old Town and the promenade that runs through the Marina and the Cantons, which constitute a facade of the city with views of the port and the estuary formed by houses with traditional glass paneled galleries and some good examples of modernist architecture. To all this has been added the renovation and construction, in recent decades, of a series of museums -Museum of Fine Arts, Picasso House Museum, Domus, House of Science, an Aquarium and auditoriums, which have converted the city in a point of

reference for leisure and cultural tourism.

As for the historical origins of A Coruña, a great deal of data remain from the Roman times. Firstly, the town is mentioned by Latin geographers as Portus Magnus Artabrorum -The Great Port of Artabros-, according to whom, it was a strategic centre on the "tin route". By then it would already have had a lighthouse, cited by Ptolemy as a lighthouse of Brigantium, a name given by Latin historians to the coasts of Galicia in the time of Julius Caesar. Everything points, then, to the fact that A Coruña was a hub of communications and an important port, whose lighthouse known today as The Tower of Hercules would have been built during the 1st century A.D., a century to which other Roman remains also belong in the areas of the Pescadería and Monte Alto.

In the fourteenth century, during the reign of Henry III, the city was protected by a walled enclosure of which some remains can still be seen in the Old Town, including three doors on the Paseo del Parrote, opposite the bay, as well as the bulwark of the Old Fortress, which currently houses the romantic gardens of San Carlos.

Another central aspect of the history of the city was its role in international conflicts in the form of battles on land and sea. During the sixteenth century it was one of the ports to suffer most from attacks from the British army and

pirates. Thus, in 1589 the legendary Coruñan woman Maria Pita became the heroine of the town for having fought against the admiral and ex-corsair Sir Francis Drake, who besieged the city in response to attacks from the 'Invincible Armada', as the Spanish fleet was then called.

During the Napoleonic invasion the relationship between the town and the English changed completely, when the townsmen became allies of the English against the French

occupation. Here they fought side by side with their former aggressors in several engagements, of which the most famous was the battle of Elviña, which took place on January 16, 1809.

It was during the battle of Elviña when Sir John Moore, who commanded the British forces in the Iberian Peninsula, was mortally wounded and buried in the town. This burial was immortalized by the poet Charles Wolfe and Moore's grave can still be visited in the San Carlos Gardens, which we mentioned before.



The city of A Coruña still retains its role as the port of arrival of pilgrim ships, a role that has greatly increased in importance since the town became the official starting point of the Camino Ingles route. The city is only 73 kilometers from Santiago, but for some years now it has possible to obtain the Compostela from A Coruña. By making a short tour of the town itself, the pilgrims will be able to immerse themselves in history and the Jacobean tradition that surrounds it.

For this tour, the pilgrim must depart from the Church of Santiago,

the main Jacobean landmark of the city in which he will receive the necessary accreditation. This church is a good example of transitional architecture between Romanesque and Gothic, the highlight of which is the relief of Santiago Matamoros that occupies the tympanum over the main door.

The Camino goes on later through Irrigation of the Water and Real Street, then continuing along the port zone, the Avenue of the Navy, Cantons and Gardens of Méndez Núñez and different streets of the most modern city in the direction of the Romanesque church of Santiago de O Burgo, already in the Culleredo neighbourhood.

