



CAMINO MIÑOTO RIBEIRO

Camino Miñoto Ribeiro is one of the oldest routes that connected the north of Portugal with the town of St James the Apostle. It seems to be the spine of a territory which englobes among other characteristics, the three distinctive elements which bestow its very own character: Nature, Thermal Water and Wine.

From the description in a work "El Camino Portugués" ("The Portuguese Way") by Luis Fernández Garrido we read: "... today the Way of St James still leads in its major part through those very same trails, numerous Roman roads and paved mediaeval tracks..." This relational character can be traced to really ancient times, as it connects ancient ruins and prehistoric settlements, and the great abundance of megalithic sites and tombs, which remind us of the primitive inhabitants of these places.

These providencial developments and vitality would be later enriched with one exceptional Roman road that runs across this ancient itinerary, the Camiño Miñoto Ribeiro. Thus, from the lands of Bracara Augusta and through Baixa Limia, the magnificent Serra do Xurés, and along the Miño river we finally arrive at Ribeiro. The wine of this region has been transported to Santiago by the carriers, who share the route with the pilgrims.

A clear reflection of this reality was a request made by Don Pedro Martin Cermeño García Paredes –the general captain of the Kingdom of Galicia– during a tribute in memory of the canon of the Santiago Cathedral D. Jorge Cisneros. After taking a bath in hot springs in the town of Cortegada he complained about the situation of the roads leading from there to Santiago, the bridges and crossings, which were in a bad state, "so that pilgrims, travellers and merchants could travel with less inconveniences".

All this was made possible thanks to numerous services which had developed along the route, related to pilgrimages and winery. The order of the Templars, the hospitals of St John, later reconstructed as one of order of Malta, left significant heritage. Thus we have records of hospitals at Sta. María de Fiães (St Mary of Fiães), San Salvador de Paderne (The Saviour of Paderne) in Melgaço, or the church of Santiago de Barbeita (St James of Barbeita) in Monção, hospital in Entrimo, Sta. María del Hospital del Condado, San Pedro de la Torre (Padrenda), Priorato de Refoxos (Cortegada), San Mauro (Arnoia), up to 6 hospitals in the town of Ribadavia, Cabanelas and, of course, those in Beade y Pazos de Arenteiro.

It is both curious and significant that all these strategically located institutions seem to have one thing in common: the abundance of thermal waters. From 'caldas de Lobios'

(hot springs in Lobios), through those in Braga, Ponte da Barca, Arcos de Valdevez, Monção, Melgaço, Padrenda (La Granja), Cortegada de Baños, Arnoia, Prexigueiro, they all provided the perfect relief to the exhausted pilgrims, or any other ailment they had suffered on their way.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF THE ROUTE

Itinerary

No doubt we are talking about another outstanding route that connected northern Portugal with Galicia. It is indeed a route that leads inland, as opposed to the coastal route via Valença and Tui.

The route has three possible crossings from Portugal to Spain:

1. From northern Braga, Vila Verde, Ponte da Barca, Arcos de Valdevez, Monção, Melgaço, crossing the municipalities of Padrenda, Pontedevea, Cortegada, Arnoia, Castrelo de Miño, Ribadavia, Beade, Leiro, Carballiño, Boborás, Beariz, Forcarei, A Estrada, Vedra, Boqueixón and Santiago de Compostela.
2. Braga, Vila Verde, Ponte da Barca, Ermelo, Lindoso, hacia Baixa Limia, Lobios and Entrimo, Castro Leboeiro, where it connects with the main route.
3. Terras de Bouro, ancient Río Caldo, until the outskirts of Lobios and towards Entrimo and Castro Leboeiro, where it connects with the main route.

More specifically, from Castro Leboeiro, where people from Braga used to come, Braga, Vila Verde, Ponte da Barca, Ermelo, Lindoso, Compostela, Lobios, Entrimo, Lamas de Mouro, A Peneda, and through "Camiño da Porteliña", it heads to Alcobaça and Azoreira villages through "Porto dos Cabaleiros", arriving at Monterredondo. From there it heads towards Lapiñeiras, Freans, Carballal (A Porteliña), San Roque, San Amaro, along 'camiño da Portela', Lordelo, Carreira and Condado. Here, at Santa María do Condado Hospital it joins pilgrim routes coming from Braga, Vila Verde, Ponte da Barca, Arcos de Valdevez Monção, Melgaço through Braga, Vila Verde, Ponte da Barca, Arcos de Valdevez Monção, Melgaço, and with the ones from Fiães and Paderne, from Pousafoles to Lavandeira.

You would follow Saa, Laxa, Trado (Pontedevea), crossing Ponte Trado, which spans the Deva river. At this point we enter the municipality of Cortegada de Baños, known for its hot springs and thermal waters, San Martiño de Valongo, A Barca, Louredo (San Vicente monastery), and Meréns, where we join those coming from Gomesende, after they have rested in Refoxos Priory. Then we head to Arnoia and Ponte Castrelo, where we would meet pilgrims coming from Celanova or Reza, going towards Ribadavia.

Next, setting off from San Cristovo de Eigón, we head to Beade towards Vieite, then to San Clodio, and from there to Cabanelas and Pazos de Arenteiro. Next we will cross the land of Boborás, Salón, Albarellos and from there head to Feás and later to Fenteiras, Sonelle, Santas, Hermida, Portela de Lamas, Soutelo, Vilapouca, Cachafeiro, Ponte Gomial, Forcarei, Chamosa, Salgueiras, Lebosos, Quintillán, Capela de San Amaro, Meavía, Seoane, Pardemarín, Lamas, Rubín, Bemposta, Antigua, Moreira, Ribeira, Ponte Sarandón, Muineiros, Marrozos, Eixo, Ponte Pedriña, San Cristovo de Merín and Santiago de Compostela.