

Logroño

Logroño is a city rich in history and traditions which have been preserved since the Middle Ages. The Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela made this one of the most important towns on the route, leaving an interesting monumental site closely linked to the traditional passage of pilgrims.

The history of Logroño cannot be separated from the **Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela**. Such is the case that the city did not become important until the peak of the Road to Santiago, from the 11th century onwards.

The Codex Calixtinus (12th century), the first guide to the Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela, already mentions Logroño in its pages. The passage of traders, artists and pilgrims through the paved streets of the capital of La Rioja over the centuries have made the city a crossing point of great cultural relevance.

The river Ebro flows through the city and over it are two bridges which serve to connect Logroño with Navarre and Álava. The older of the two is the **Stone Bridge**, which allows the pilgrim Road to reach the city. Originally (11th century), it was fortified with four arches and three towers. Another bridge, this time made of iron and built in the 19th century, also crosses the river.

Of the former wall which surrounded the city, still standing are the Revellín wall and the Charles I gate. During the festivities in honour of the patron saint, this place is the venue for acts which commemorate the French siege of the city.

Around the **Rúa Vieja** (Old Street), a traditional thoroughfare for pilgrims on their way to Compostela, we can see the most important representations of Jacobean architecture such as the **Pilgrims' Inn** and the famous **Pilgrims' fountain**. The **church of Santiago** is also a clear reminder of the importance of the Pilgrim's Road. This monumental building, erected in the 16th century, has a single nave and its façade shows a formidable image of Santiago Matamoros (Saint James the slayer of Moors). Inside the church is venerated the image of the Virgen de la Esperanza (the Virgin of Hope), the patron saint of Logroño.



The historical centre assembles important cultural landmarks, such as the **Cathedral of Santa María la Redonda** (15th-18th centuries), with its imposing baroque towers overlooking the Market square. The current cathedral complex stands on the site of a former round-shaped Romanesque church. Worthy of note amongst the important sculptural works in the building are the carvings by Gregorio Fernández and a representation of the Calvary by the Renaissance master Michelangelo.

There is a wealth of churches in Logroño, with a particularly fine example being **Santa María de Palacio**, the oldest in the city, which dominates the skyline of Logroño with its Gothic spire. Inside the church there is a magnificent cloister, a Flemish reredos and various Romanesque pieces. Very close by is the Mudejar tower of the **church of San Bartolomé**, dedicated to the patron saint of the city. Built in the 12th century, it retains an exquisite sculpted main front and is the only example of Romanesque art in the city.



Logroño also has fine examples of civic architecture, such as the **palace of the Marquis of Legarda**, the palace of the **Spires** and the **Museum of La Rioja**, housed in the Espartero palace, a baroque building from the 18th century.

The avenues and squares of Logroño are also a good way of soaking up the atmosphere of its streets. The **Paseo del Espolón** is one of the most representative areas of the city and **Plaza**

del Mercado is a favourite meeting point for its inhabitants.

Gastronomy and surroundings

La Rioja's rich garden produce lends itself to the preparation of some of the specialities which make up the renowned **culinary tradition of La Rioja**. Asparagus, beans, **peppers**, artichokes and other vegetables and pulses are the basis for a long list of dishes such as **vegetable broth**, **potatoes Rioja-style**, **lamb chops** and young goat with vine shoots or stuffed peppers. Typical desserts include pears in wine, **fardelejos de Arnedo** (pastry with almond paste) or Soto marzipans (made with sugar and ground almonds).

The name **Rioja** is synonymous with great Spanish wines. For decades, Riojan wines, protected by their own **Denomination of Origin**, are a compulsory reference throughout Spain and internationally.

The deep Jacobean tradition which exists in La Rioja can be felt in each of the towns through which the Road to Santiago passes in this province. Leaving Logroño behind, the **French Route** passes through **Navarrete**, with remains of a former pilgrim hospital, and **Nájera**, the former royal court. In the latter we can admire the **Monastery of Santa María la Real** (Saint Mary the Royal), which is notable for its splendid cloister and its function as a shelter for pilgrims. Continuing along this route, walkers must take a detour of some kilometres to **San Millán de la Cogolla** in order to admire the incredible beauty of the complex formed by the **Monasteries of Suso and Yuso**, declared a **World Heritage site**. **Santo Domingo de la Calzada** is the last great stage of the Rioja section of the Pilgrim's Road. Particularly worthy of note in this carefully tended town are its walls, its roadway and the Cathedral of San Salvador. A welcome for visitors is provided in the Casa del Santo and the **Tourist Parador**, a former pilgrims' hospital built in the 12th century next to the cathedral complex.

Away from the Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela, other towns of great importance in La Rioja are Calahorra, the capital of **Lower Rioja**, which has a **Tourist Parador**; the neighbouring **Alfaro**, whose historic quarter is home to the collegiate church of the Archangel Saint Michael (16th-17th centuries); and **Haro**, a stately town which has become the centre of Rioja wine production.

In the south of the region it is possible to travel the **Dinosaurs Route**, an itinerary which allows one to admire the diverse imprints left by these prehistoric animals.



Another attractive feature of La Rioja is its wealth of nature. The **Nature Reserve of the Cebollera Mountain Range**, in the region of Los Cameros, which borders the province of Soria, is home to one of the largest examples of glacier landscape in the Iberian peninsula.
