

Pamplona

On the fertile plain of the river Arga stands Pamplona, a city full of history and deep-rooted traditions. The streets and squares of its historic quarter are home to an important monumental site dominated by its churches and medieval walls.

Pamplona is a city in which tradition and modernity live harmoniously side by side. Founded by the Roman general Pompeius in 75 BC, the importance of the city would increase in the 10th century with the kingdom of Pamplona. Under the reign of Sancho III the Elder (11th century), the current route of the Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela was organized through the lands of Navarre, an event which would mark both the appearance of the city and its future history. The visit to the capital of Navarre begins with the hamlets of Pamplona, a group of districts of medieval origin which were the seed of the current urban centre. In the central plaza Consistorial (Town Hall square) is the stately baroque façade of the **Town Hall**. The building, constructed in 1752, is a reminder of the union between the hamlets of San Cernín, San Nicolás and Navarrería.

Next to the town hall one can admire the **Gothic church of San Saturnino** or San Cernín, built in the 13th century. Its two towers, formerly crowned by crenellations, provide a glimpse of its former defensive role. Meanwhile, standing on the old cloister is the baroque chapel of the Virgen del Camino, the co-patron saint of the city.

The neighbouring **Cámara de Comptos** (13th century), the oldest building in the city, was between the 14th and 19th centuries the site of the former royal Auditors Court of Navarre.

Leaving by the calle Mayor we reach the **church of San Lorenzo** (19th century), which houses the baroque chapel of the city's patron saint, **San Fermín** and, finally, the **baroque basilica of the Agustinas Recoletas**, which still has a beautiful Churrigueresque reredos inside.

On the Santo Domingo hill one can see other buildings of old Iruña. The plateresque façade of the interesting **Museum of Navarre**, which houses a large collection of archeological pieces and works of art, and the 16th century **Gothic church of Santo Domingo**, which has an attractive baroque façade from the 17th century.

The plaza del Castillo, which is lined with trees and surrounded by beautiful 18th century buildings, is the very heart of the city. The **Palace of Navarre**, home of the Navarre government, was built midway through the 19th century and retains its neoclassical façade. Worthy of note inside are the Throne Room, in baroque style, the reredos in the Chapel, and a portrait of Philip VII painted by Goya.

Going down one of the adjoining streets one arrives in the Navarrería district, in the centre of which is the **cathedral of Santa María la Real**. Building on the cathedral church began halfway through the 13th century on the former Romanesque cathedral, although work was not completed until the 16th century. This magnificent building has three Gothic style naves, and various neoclassical additions. The central nave houses the **mausoleum of king Charles III the Noble** and his wife (15th century), made of alabaster and considered one of the

most important series of sculptures in Navarre. The high altar is dominated by the image of the Virgen del Sagrario, in front of which the monarchs of Navarre swore an oath during their coronation ceremonies.

Equally worthy of note is the **Gothic cloister** (13th-15th centuries), with its Puerta del Amparo, the Barbazana chapel and the Puerta Preciosa. The Diocesan Museum has an interesting collection of works of sacred art, with a group of medieval sculptures of the Virgin and various objects of French medieval precious metalwork being particular high points.

Next to the cathedral complex are a number of houses belonging to noblemen, such as the **Itúrbide** house, from the 17th century, which bears the family coat of arms, and the **Goyeneche** Palace, built a century later.

The city's new suburb has a number of wide green spaces: the **Citadel park**, the Taconera park and the Half Moon gardens are living examples of a city which has undergone model urban growth.

Gastronomy, festivals and surroundings.

The historic quarter of Pamplona is a good place to get to know the excellent varied **gastronomy of Navarre**. Any of the restaurants here offer typical products from Navarre's vegetable garden –**asparagus, piquillo peppers** and beans. **Roast lamb** or **lamb chilindrón** (in a special marinade) is the most emblematic dish, always accompanied by a good wine with **Denomination of Origin of Navarre** and pacharán (a typical aniseed liqueur) for dessert. To get to know Pamplona and its inhabitants in full festival flow, the ideal time to visit the city is during the **Sanfermines** (6-14 July), a festival **declared of International Tourist Interest**. One of the greatest attractions of this patron saint festival are its **encierros** (the traditional running of the bulls), which follow a route down Santo Domingo hill, along Mercaderes street to the junction with Estafeta, which then runs into the bullring. However, before taking part in this tradition one should be in good physical condition and adopt certain precautions, such as only entering via permitted access points, running only one section of the route and not goading the bulls. It is also important to book accommodation well in advance of the festivals. 45 km from the capital of Navarre, in the historic medieval town of Olite, is the **Prince of Viana Parador**. This establishment adjoins the 15th century palace-castle, which has been declared a National Monument and whose towers and crenellations are particularly worthy of note.

Near Pamplona one can also enjoy sites of great natural beauty. To the west is the **Nature Reserve of Urbasa and Andía**. To the north, the villages and valleys of the **Navarre Pyrenees** offer some of the most beautiful countryside in the whole province. In the **Atlantic Pyrenees**, the most western part, are large nature areas, such as the **Nature Reserve of Bertiz**.

One of the largest valleys is the **Baztán** valley, which is surrounded by mountains and has villages such as Berroeta, Aniz, Ziga, etc., all of which have a large number of medieval towers and palaces. Good examples of these buildings can be found in the capital of the valley, Elizondo, a good starting point to visit **Urdax** and **Zugarramurdi**, two places known for their caves and for being former sites for covens (meetings of witches).



The main attraction of the the **Eastern Pyrenees** is the **Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela**. The route, on its way from France, enters Navarre until it reaches Roncesvalles, a town which came into being as a sanctuary and hospital in 1132 and the first stopping point for the pilgrims. Following the mountain chain to the east, we find the **Iratí Forest**, a unique natural area which is one of the largest beech tree groves in southern Europe. Another point of interest in the eastern Pyrenees is the **Salazar Valley** and Ochagavía, the most populous town in this region.
