



SANTO DOMINGO DE LA CALZADA AND ITS PARADOR

HOSPICE OF PILGRIMS AND MIRACLES

"A small town of around a thousand inhabitants on the east bank of the River Oja, from which the town takes its name of La Rioja."

Henry Cook, Dutch Historian and Archer in Felipe II's Guard. 1592.

Chicken or egg? The Calceatenses, as the inhabitants of Santo Domingo de la Calzada are called, have no doubt that the chicken came first. This is as important to the town as its saint, its bridge and the pilgrims' route to Santiago. Or, possibly, all four are one and the same thing. Without any one of them, this town, founded in the 11th century, would not be the same.

"Santo Domingo de la Calzada, cried the roast chicken."

La Rioja is a land where Mozarabic and Carolingian cultures meet. A medieval, agricultural frontier land, a rich and therefore strategic land. A place of transit on the Way of St. James, the pilgrims' route to Santiago. The first known pilgrim, the French bishop of Le Puy, came through here via Albelda and its San Martín Monastery, on his way to and from Compostela.

A man named Domingo was born in the small village of Vitoria de Rioja (Burgos) in 1019 to a family of wealthy landowners. He eventually decided to withdraw from normal life and looked for an unpopulated area in which to live as a hermit. And it was in La Rioja, in that area which extends from the right bank of the Oja River towards the Ebro, once filled with holm oaks, where he took up his residence.

He studied at the Monastery of Valvanera, around seven leagues from Nájera, and was rejected both there and in the monastery at San Millán in his attempts to become a monk. He collaborated with Gregorio, Bishop of Ostia, who had been sent by the Pope to Calahorra to exorcise a plague of locusts. He was ordained by the future San Gregorio, and traveled La Rioja with him. The two were responsible for raising the first wooden bridge over the Oja River.

His life changed dramatically when his master died in 1044, from one of contemplation to one of fervent activity. He became a nurse, doctor, cook, bricklayer, and architect. His biography would describe him as if he were a modern businessman. He was a skilful negotiator who took full advantage of the disputes between Castile and Navarra. He accumulated lands as he predicted the success that the pilgrims' Way of St. James would have.

His history is the history of the town. Building the road that would be the definitive route to Compostela "from Nájera, through Azofra, Cirueña, Santo Domingo and Grañón" would mark the beginning of the new town that took his name as its first name and calzada (road), as its surname.

Records show that he lived from 1019 to 1109. During his long life he saw the reigns of several monarchs, and many important events and decisive political processes that would shape the Spain and Europe of that time.

Once the road was completed, he built a well and a hospice for pilgrims. The latter is now the Parador. The surrounding woods were cut



to make room for vines, cereals, and vegetables. The sickle that he used for this work was buried with him; it was a simple tool with a five centimeter handle and a blade of little more than twenty centimeters. He used it to cut the wood to clear a road to the bridge as a safe place to cross the rough waters of the Oja as they flowed down from their source in the Sierra de la Demanda.

King Alfonso VI was surprised by the success of Domingo's repopulation of the area and ceded land and privileges to him, and also made him responsible for all the work being done along the length of the pilgrims' route to Santiago. It is no wonder then that the Association of Roads, Channels and Harbors, the services that make up the Ministry of Public Works, and the National College of



Estate Managers, all were established under the patronage and protection of the Saint.

The Council of Santo Domingo is first mentioned in the records of 1136. In 1158, Bishop Rodrigo of Cascante and Abbot Lupo laid the first stone of a church. Only part of its chancel and transept stand today.

It was first administered by the Abbot, then came under royal control, and was finally granted town status by Alfonso XI in 1333. It was surrounded by a wall by order of Pedro I.

Throughout its history it has been home to Franciscans from Cidamón and to Cistercian Bernadine nuns from the Monastery of Abia (Palencia). This Baroque and neo-classical town is overflowing with religious symbolism.

A PURIFYING AND COMFORTING PLACE TO STAY

When the Lord of Caumont went to Compostela in 1417, he saw a white rooster and hen in La Calzada's church. The story behind them is told by Jeanne Veillard in "Le guide du Pelerin":

"A pilgrim and his wife were on their way to Santiago, with their very handsome son in tow. A servant girl in the inn where they spent the night fell in love with the young man. As he refused to take any notice of her, she crept into his room while he was asleep and slipped one of the innkeeper's silver cups into his bag.

The following day, when the mother, father and son had left to continue their journey, the girl told the innkeeper that the cup was missing and that it must have been stolen by the pilgrims. The innkeeper sent a party after them to check and caught up with them a league away from the town. When asked if they had the cup, they replied that they were good and honest pilgrims and that they would never commit such a crime.

But their word was not enough, and first the father was checked and then the mother, but the men found nothing. The cup was eventually found in the son's bag, where the girl had put it, much to the chagrin of the pilgrims. They were taken back to the town and the son was tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. This caused the parents great suffering, but did not prevent them from continuing their pilgrimage to Santiago.

On their way back home, the parents went to the gallows in Santo Domingo to see their son and to pray to God for his soul. As they approached, they started to weep uncontrollably, but they found that their son was still alive and well. Ever since they had left, a noble man had held his feet so that no harm would come to him.

The parents went to see the judge, imploring him to let their son go as he was still alive. The judge refused to believe that it was possible, despite the mother and father's insistence.

The judge was roasting a rooster and a hen for his lunch. He said that he would believe that the boy was still alive if the roasted birds sang. At that moment, the hen and rooster jumped out of the pan and started to sing.



The judge was so amazed that he gathered a group together to go to the gallows, where he found that the parents had told him the truth. The boy was cut down, alive and well. He told them that he knew

nothing of the cup and how the servant girl had solicited him. She was arrested and confessed that she had done it to spite him because he had refused her. She was hanged, and even today there is a rooster and a hen in the church of the same breed as the ones that sang to the judge. I have seen them for myself and they are completely white."

The legend spread during the 15th century as pilgrims took it home with them and recounted it as the most interesting thing they had heard on their trip. For this reason, there are a number of places in Europe, including Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Portugal, and France where there are paintings or stories of a pilgrim on his way to Compostela who is falsely accused of theft and hanged.

This is a story that could be summarized in today's cinematic terms as: girl meets boy, boy faces death, boy and hen meet justice. All caused by love and indifference.

Domingo knew how the pilgrims suffered and the need to offer charity to walkers and to the sick, but the process of building the road and the services was slow due to lack of resources. The type of spiritually based on donating land to the church, masses for the dead, and burials in holy places changed in the 11th century, making way for a mentality based on purifying sins by fervent and difficult pilgrimages, providing

help to pilgrims and travelers, or donating to hospices set up to attend those in need. Thus, the work on the hospice started by the Saint and continued by the Abbots who succeeded him was perfectly in line with the Christian mentality of the time.

A donation to the hospice by its benefactor, Sancha Sánchez, is recorded in 1120. "He gave vines, hills, woods, water, and pasturelands to help support the poor in Christ and those who wished to serve God in the Church and Hospice of the saintly and just Domingo."

The hospice was built on the woodland belonging to the Kings of Navarra, where there was an old palace, possibly used for recreation. It appears likely that "the Saint asked King García de Navarra y Nájera for permission to build a hospice." The original layout followed the design of the great hospices on the Jacobean route, but it was rebuilt at a later date.

The Parador is built on the site of the former Pilgrims' Hospice. It conserves the original well, found in an attractive courtyard, which was built by the Saint. The building has been modified on many occasions, but still has elements from the 15th century. The floor is a basilica layout with three naves separated by pointed arches on octagonal pillars. The lack of vaults is a reminder that the charitable orders showed their devotion to poverty through their plain and simple surroundings.

The Parador opened its doors in November of 1966. In 1990, three neighboring houses were acquired and the final modifications were completed three years later. Its location in the Plaza del Santo, right next to the cathedral, the tower and the Sanctuary of La Virgen de la Plaza, gives it a unique beauty. Its former function as a hospice has been taken over by the Albergue del Peregrino, where the brotherhood and the Jacobean museum are also housed.



A STOP ON THE PILGRIMS' WAY

1. **Cathedral.** The most noteworthy features are the high altarpiece, the choir stalls, the fourteen chapels, the Gothic "henhouse" which houses a live rooster and hen, and the cloister.
2. **The Tower.**
3. **Pilgrim's Hostel.**
4. **Monastery of San Francisco.**
5. **Town Walls.**
6. **Town Hall.**



ON THE "OXYGEN COAST": WHERE THE FOOD IS GOOD AND THE DRINK IS BETTER

Santo Domingo de La Calzada, the town and its Saint, have always been known for their hospitality toward pilgrims. This concern for the well being of strangers continues today and covers both spiritual and material needs. Food and drink are fundamental needs to be met. On 12 May, the anniversary of the Saint's death, the same meal the Saint offered to his guests is carefully prepared:

"the meat of three fattened lambs, a 'fanega' measure of chickpeas, several baskets of chard and vegetables and an 'arroba' of bacon".

The gastronomy in Santo Domingo and the surrounding area continues to be exquisite both in quality and quantity. The vegetable gardens and mountain pastures provide the main ingredients. Small and large peppers are either stuffed or used as a flavoring for sauces, and beans, vegetables, and potatoes are found in abundance. The famous **Menestra Riojana** (vegetable medley), **Potatoes with Chorizo** seasoned pork sausage and **Cutlets prepared with Vine shoots, Lamb and Pork Stews** and **Rioja-style Cod** are all staple dishes.

In addition to its prestigious Medieval Market event, held every year in December, the Parador also organizes the **Pilgrims' Way Market**, where travelers can purchase the most representative products prepared along the Way of St. James. A **Rioja Cuisine Gastronomy Fair** is also held, extending the culinary offerings beyond the region's most traditional dishes. **Caparrón** (small kidney beans) **with Pork Ribs**, fresh, locally-grown **Artichokes with Clams** and **Cameros Lamb with Salad** are all healthy, tasty dishes that should not be missed.

And for dessert, why not try **Pear Mille Feuille with Hot Chocolate Sauce**, or the **Santo Domingo Cake**, a variation on the

Santiago Cake, made with cheese, raisins and almonds. Or the **Beato de Hermosilla Cake**, **Pastel Ruso de Arnedillo** or **Fardalejos from Arnedo**, a type of fritter filled with squash compote. For the more adventurous, try **Homemade Olive Oil** or **Red Piquillo Pepper Flavored Ice Creams**. And of course, **Fresh Fruit**, such as peaches, plums, and strawberries.

Santo Domingo de la Calzada is known in Vizcaya as the "Oxygen Coast" for its good food, wines, landscapes, nature, peacefulness, and hospitality. For this reason, it is quite common in the summer to share a table with people from Bilbao, who are great gourmets.

And to drink, none other than a Rioja wine from the Alta or Alavesa regions. Wines from the Alta region are smoother because of the hours of sun and rain that provide a more stable climate for the vines, according to the experts. Non-experts simply savor the wine from any bottle produced in

the region—they are all good. The Parador's professional wine waiter will recommend the best wine to accompany the food chosen.

Pilgrims, travelers, and strangers passing through on their way to the Basque Region, or to Navarra or Castile or Santiago, all know that the Parador is the modern-day example of the town's hospitality. The Prince of Asturias and his sisters, the Princesses, stayed here in the summer of 1993, the Jacobean Year, during their own pilgrimage to Santiago. General De Gaulle was here in 1970 and there have been many other visitors from the world of entertainment, including the musical group Los Tres Sudamericanos, or the unforgettable children's comic, Tonetti. Sporting and football stars often stay here on their way to Las Gaunas.



Santo Domingo de la Calzada, where the roast chicken sang. Originally a bridge. Now a Guarantee of Origin. And in that origin lies its future.

WALKS ALONG MONKS' PATHS

The town of Santo Domingo de la Calzada occupies an area of 40 square kilometers. It is at an altitude of 638 meters, 46 km from Logroño and 60 km from Burgos. This is the perfect location for the visitor to embark on an endless number of excursions around the Autonomous Community of La Rioja.

La Rioja Alta is a long stretch of land that reaches from the banks of the Ebro River to the Sierra de la Demanda mountains. This is rich, agricultural land where cereals, potatoes and beetroot grow, as well as grape vines.

The Parador's reception desk is the best place to ask for information on trips, monuments, opening hours, and prices of places to visit. A few short itineraries are provided below: short in distance but stunning to see. This is a unique mix, where history is handcrafted, nature is rich, the culture is natural, and the crafts are historic.

■ **Santo Domingo, Castañares, Casalarreina, Haro, Cihuri and Sajazarra**, 35 km to the north.

■ A visit can be arranged to the **Convent of Nuestra Señora de La Piedad in Casalarreina**, a Gothic and Renaissance building with a

magnificent entrance. The **Town Hall** and the **Palaces of Las Bezaras, Paternina** and the **Counts of Haro**, can also be visited, not forgetting "**Las Conchas de Haro**", where the Ebro flows through two limestone valves at the entrance to the town. There is a **Roman Bridge** at **Cihuri** and the **Sajazarra Castle**. Great variety in a very short distance.

■ **Santo Domingo, Cañas, Berceo, San Millán de la Cogolla**. 25 km to the south at the foot of the mountains.

■ **The Monastery of Santa María de Cañas**, founded in the 12th century by Count López Díaz of Haro, Cistercian ogival style. The **Tomb of Doña Urraca**, its 4th century Abbess, is the main feature. Also, the **Monasteries of Suso and Yuso** in **San Millán de la Cogolla** are worth visiting. The latter is known as La Rioja's El Escorial, built by order of King García of Nájera in the 11th century.

■ **Santo Domingo, Nájera**. Fifteen minutes by car in the direction of Logroño, this is the cradle of kings and noblemen. The incomparable **Monastery of Santa María la Real** is the scene of the *Crónica Najerense* every July, when local actors play out the history of the town.

■ **La Sierra de la Demanda, Anguiano** and **Ezcaray**. The first monastery of **Nuestra Señora de Valvanera**, a Benedictine abbey, where monks have made the medicinal Valvanera liqueur using herbs from the surrounding hills since medieval times. The **Parish Church of Santa María la Mayor**, and "**Los Mallos de Anguiano**", which is a natural gorge carved by the Najerilla River, are the highlights of this route.

■ **Logroño**. Capital of La Rioja, it is reached on the main road. Its sights include: **Cathedral of Santa María la Redonda** and the **Church of Santiago el Real**. It also has a stone bridge and a jetty. The **Calle del Laurel** is famous for its leather crafts and handmade wineskins.



■ We can also start a hike from Santo Domingo on one of the routes taking between three and five hours, through **Ezcaray, Ojacastro, Zorraquín** and **Valgañón**. Pines, meadows, pastures, ash, hazelnut trees, broom and heather abound. This is a landscape of ridges, rocks, and ravines. Or travelers may choose horseback riding in the Sierra, or fishing in the eleven areas where trout fishing is permitted on the **Tirón, Neila, Urbión, Najerilla, Iregua** and **Cidacos Rivers**. Or skiing in **Valdezcaray**, at an altitude of 2,271 meters, near Pico de San Lorenzo.

■ Rediscover the route of artisans and their crafts: the stone cutters and blankets of **Ezcaray**, the pottery of **Navarrete**, the barrel makers of **Cenicero**, or the wineskins and frontón balls of Logroño. Without forgetting the numerous, local festivals of the region, such as the **Las Doncellas Procession** in **Santo Domingo**, reproduced in a mural in the Parador's dining room. The **Briones Dance** and the **Anguiano Dancers**, the **Theft of the Arnedo Saints**, the **San Vicente de la Sonsierra Picaos**, **Grape Treading in Logroño** and the **Wine Battle in Haro**. La Rioja wine, La Rioja culture.

■ Vine shoots, grape skins, and grapes. The **Bodegas Route** around the wineries of la Rioja Alta is also highly recommended. Ask for information at the Parador's reception desk.



PARADOR DE SANTO DOMINGO DE LA CALZADA

Plaza del Santo, 3. 26250 Santo Domingo de la Calzada (La Rioja)
Tel.: +34 941 34 03 00 - Fax: +34 941 34 03 25
e-mail: sto.domingo@parador.es

Reservation Center

Requena, 3. 28013 Madrid (España)
Tel.: 902 54 79 79 - Fax: 902 52 54 32
www.parador.es / e-mail: reservas@parador.es
wap.parador.es/wap/

Text: Miguel García Sánchez. Design: Fernando Aznar