

Cangas de Onís and its Parador

Some say that they were Celts or Normans, others speak of Jewish descendancy from Roman slaves. Whatever the truth, the Asturian people jealously guard their very ancient ways and customs.

The Roman conquest was particularly intense when the people of Asturias and Cantabria joined together to fight against Rome. The Kingdom of Asturias was created after the rebellion of people from these regions, represented by King Pelayo who defeated the Moslems in the battle of Covadonga (in the year 722) when the Reconquest began. The village of Cangas de Onís was the first capital of the Kingdom.

Why the Parador de Cangas de Onís? - A jewel set on the green banks of the River *Sella*, which is reflected in the waters below.

Tradition maintains that the building was started by King Alfonso I, 'The Catholic', on 21st February 746 and excavations carried out before conversion work started on the building confirms this idea. The monastery was run by the Order of *San Benito* until the sale of Church lands in 1835. Two rooms displaying the archaeological discoveries found during refurbishment work, especially ceramics, bear witness to its distant past.

The splendid structure of the present-day *Parador* was built in the setting of the 12th century, in the heart of the Romanesque period, a time of pilgrimages. However, with the passing of time, significant changes have been made.

The monastery inevitably suffered the rage of *Mendizábal*, the seizure of church lands in the mid-19th century known as the *Desamortización*. Later the Royal Academy of History proposed that it be declared a national monument. Finally, in 1995 the building was refurbished to turn it into a *Parador de Turismo*. The present-day traveller spends the night in a room which was a cell occupied by monks who worked, prayed and provided hospitality to pilgrims, some with more faith than others. Let the visitor remember that this was a basilica which once contained a royal pantheon, an obligatory and pious point of reference from around the 13th century. Of that past, only a few witnesses remain today: the walls of the nave and three original apses.



The Monastery was declared a National Monument in 1907 with a new wing added using building materials to match the original.

In the restaurant you can enjoy the Asturian stew, *fabada*, and the different types of exquisite local cheeses -*Cabrales*, *Gamoneo* and *Beyos*-, accompanied of course, by natural local cider for which *Asturias* is famous.

Sightseeing in the area

Setting off from the Parador, visitors can enjoy any number and any variety of diverse sights and sensations, among them the region's ever-changing and surprising geography and nature. The seas along the coast are rough at times, and at others pleasant and peaceful. The mountains are steep and threatening, covered with enduring snows, but in spring and summer both climate and people are generous in both words and action. Traditions and handicrafts have been well and carefully preserved. Excursions take us back into the earliest prehistory and the purest Romanesque times.

- *Cangas de Onís*
 - Roman Ruins
 - Santa Cruz* Chapel
 - Cortés* Palace
 - Casa Dago* (Welcome Centre for visitors from the *Picos de Europa* National Park).
 - There is an interesting market selling local products on most Sunday mornings.
- *Buxu* Caves; Solutrean period, upper Paleolithic (*Cardes*, 4 miles)
- *Fitu* viewpoint: marvellous views from the *Sierra del Sueve* over the *Picos de Europa* and the coast. Located between the towns of *Arriendas* and *Colunga*.
- Stunning beaches
- *Ribadesella* (*Tito Bustillo* cave, rock art from the Paleolithic period)
- *Llanes* (medieval quarter)
- *Ribadeveva* (Archive of the *Indias* in *Colombres*)
- *Colunga* (*Asturias* Jurassic Museum)



The *Picos de Europa* is the second largest National Park in Spain, located in the autonomous regions of *Cantabria*, *Asturias* and *Castilla y León*. *Cangas de Onís* occupies 7,119 hectares of the total *Picos* area that is 64,660 hectares. The capital is located in the intersection of the rivers *Sella* and *Gueña* where the highest peaks in *Asturias* can be found, reaching up to 2,648 metres. The rivers are short but contain copious amounts of water. The most notable rivers being the *Deva*, the *Sella* and the *Nalón*.

We recommend visiting the Lakes of *Covadonga*, a mythical enclave, and the *Covadonga* Sanctuary, where there is the Basilica, the *Santa Cueva* (cave) and the Museum of Treasure (the origin and evolution of the Sanctuary is displayed through paintings, engravings, images and pieces of silver/gold work).

If you are a nature lover there are a lot of outdoor activities available nearby including mountain biking, rambling and trekking, canoeing, equestrian trails, mountaineering and trout fishing.



THE SAINT JAMES WAY

The discovery of the tomb of James the apostle was the reason for the first pilgrimage to *Santiago de Compostela* and because of this the small *Locus Sancti Iacobi* turned into an important religious and cultural centre.

The legend says that in about year 820 A.D. a shepherd discovered the alleged tomb of Saint James the apostle in the mount where *Compostela* is today and in those days belonging to the Christian Kingdom of *Asturias*. *Teodomiro*, who was the Bishop of *Iria Flavia* (currently *Padron*) at that time, heard the news and informed *Alfonso II The Chaste* who was the King of *Oviedo*. He believed that it was a divine message and decided to go with his court to the place of the discovery and to get there they used the old Roman paved road. This was the first pilgrimage to *Santiago*.

Faraway places in Europe are connected with the tomb which represents one of the most iconic religious pillars in Europe. Although there are many choices to undertake such a pilgrimage, to true Catholics the route is a way to the ultimate spiritual goal.

Taking advantage of your stay in the *Parador de Cangas de Onís* you can follow the route along the way to *Santiago*. Although one of the routes is the “English Way” (named like this because the number of British people travelling by sea and disembarking in *La Coruña* or *Ferrol*) we suggest the “Primitive Route” (*Camino Primitivo*) that starts in *Oviedo* setting off from *Cangas* as follows:



1. *Cangas de Onís*, to discover its old town and to start the ascent to the *Covadonga* Sanctuary, the gateway to the *Picos de Europa* National Park
2. *Villaviciosa*, its peculiar estuary (Natural Reserve) and the golden sandy beaches. The Church of *San Salvador de Dios* forms part of the cultural and historical heritage here.
3. *Gijón*, visit the town and stay in the **Parador Molino Viejo** (old mill) located in *Isabel la Católica* Park
4. *Oviedo*, where everything started. A pedestrianised historic quarter where you will find the University, the Cathedral of *El Salvador*, the Palace of the Marquis of *San Félix* and the Palace of *Camposagrado*- the current venue of the High Court of *Asturias*-.
5. *Grado*, the monastery of *San Salvador de la Cornellana*
6. *Tineo*, *Salas* and *Grandas de Salime* the last villages before entering *Galicia*

Xacobeo Year 2010 –The focus is on *Santiago de Compostela*!

2010 is a Holy Year and this means that Christians can obtain “forgiveness” by visiting *Santiago de Compostela’s* Cathedral. *Xacobeo* Year has been celebrated since the Middle Ages when the festivity of *Santiago el Mayor*, on 25th July, falls on a Sunday. Each century there are 14 Holy Years that fall every 6,5,6 and 11 years. The last three of the cycle were in 1993,1999 and 2004 and the next one will be 2021. The religious celebration begins the evening of 31st of December of the year before, and finishes the same day one year later.

To discover more about this special year visit www.xacobeo.es

