

The Ribeira Sacra

Galicia in north-west Spain has relatively few tourists, apart from the pilgrims heading for Santiago de Compostela. And most of the others visit the coast. Yet the centre of Galicia has spectacular mountainous scenery, as spectacular as any in Spain; and it is green!. Large areas are contained within Unesco Biosphere Reserves.



The “Ribeira Sacra”, a little north of the Portuguese border, is particularly scenic, especially around the deep canyons of the rivers Miño and Sil.

We drove there in May 2017 after arrival in Santander. It is a three hour drive from Santander along the coastal motorway until one enters Galicia at Ribadeo. The motorway itself then continues to Santiago de Compostela two hours further on. However to reach the Ribeira Sacra one turns south at Ribadeo to join the river Miño at Lugo – the only city in the world surrounded by massive Roman walls.



From Lugo the Miño valley and the road continue south into the Ribeira Sacra. We were heading for the Parador in the Monastery of Santo Estivo apparently not very far ahead. But the Parador is at 700 metres elevation, high above the river valley. The drive becomes challenging after turning onto a slow narrow road with many hairpin bends. Finally one reaches the Parada de Sil plateau and then the Parador/Monastery in a commanding position on the lip of the canyon.

The road continues on the plateau, parallel to the river Sil and there are many mirador viewpoints, the Balcones de Madrid providing remarkable views.



After two nights at the Parador we started the return journey to Santander. - this time driving across the mountains of Asturias to the Parador at Corias, and then on to the coast at Gijon.

