

BEARIZ

Discover the magic



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THE XIRAZGA ROUTE



PRESENTATION

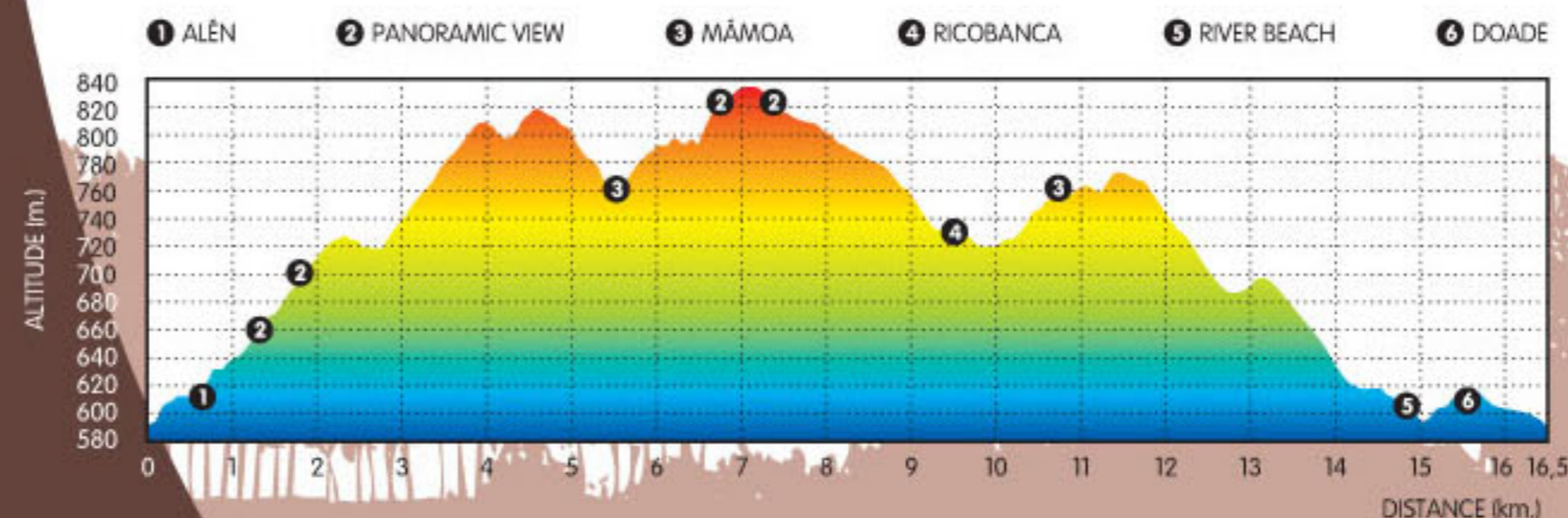
The Xirazga route combines a tour through old villages surrounded by scrubland and farmland, with the ascent to summits of mountains with scenic views. This route will allow us to have a close look at the valleys and villages, and to enjoy them from afar. Up close, one can see and touch the stones in the villages and the trees in the valleys. From afar, one can perceive the shape of the valleys that gather the water from the different streams, and see small villages at the crossroads surrounded by farmland and mountains.

This route is 16,5 km. long and its technical difficulty is low. However, it will take about 5 hours and a half to cover it on foot, and some 2 hours by bicycle. If you choose to do the route in the morning, then you will do the steepest and more exposed to the sun part of it during the coolest hours of the day.

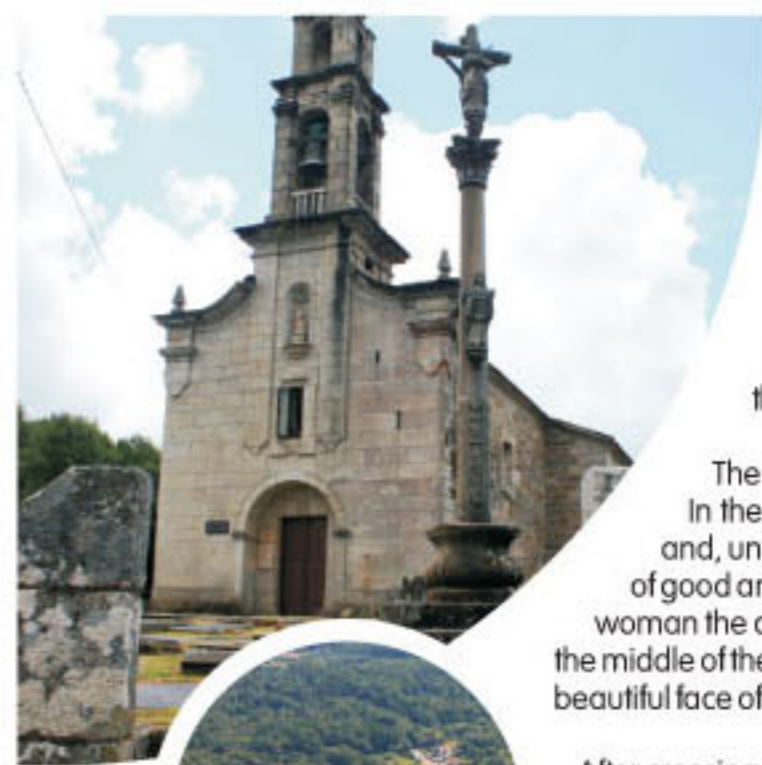
The route is suitable for walking, riding a mountain bike or even quad biking. A SUV would also do, but near the end of the route -in the village of Doade- it would be necessary to avoid the last stretch of the route, which follows a narrow cart path. It is possible to complete the route and arrive at Xirazga by following the road in the last kilometer.



THE XIRAZGA ROUTE



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The route starts by the chapel of Xirazga, where we can admire the “cruceiro” (or stone cross in English), an important work by a local sculptor: Cerviño. In the past, Beariz had stonemasons who were renowned beyond the Terra de Montes region.

The shaft of the “cruceiro” requires special attention. In the middle of it there is a depiction of Saint Dominic and, underneath, Adam and Eve. On top of them, the tree of good and evil with the snake around its trunk, offering the woman the apple. On the side of the Virgin of Sorrows -also in the middle of the shaft- there is an image of Veronica showing the beautiful face of Christ in her cloth.

After crossing the main entrance, we leave the church on our left and turn right towards Alén. The most recent constructions have been raised at both sides of the roads; this way, each house has its own vegetable garden and fruit trees (e.g. fig trees, apple trees or chestnut trees), lacking the narrowness of the old villages, now more and more deserted.

Soon we arrive to a house in ruins that stands out for its oven. It is the projecting cylindrical part of the house and where the bread used to be baked. Traditionally, the bread was made of corn flour and some rye, but since the 20th century the wheat has become more commonly used. In the surroundings of the village one can see in the summer the corn growing, although this is now almost exclusively used to feed the animals.

Following the track across the fields we soon see on the right an “eira” with five “hórreos”. The “eiras” are the places in which the grain is beaten and then left to sun-dry before putting it in the “hórreos” (a kind of raised granary, in English). For this reason, they are relatively flat and sunny surfaces located right next to the houses. The traditional house used to have an exterior staircase which linked the top floor (the dwelling) with the ground floor (for the kitchen and the animals), both with independent entrances.

It is advisable to take water at the town’s spring, because next we are facing a mild but long ascent with no springs until we get to the top, by the chapel of Saint Dominic.

We leave Alén to the left of the spring. Soon we will leave the fields behind and enter an indigenous wood where the oak predominates. We will also find birches and chestnut trees, and in the areas with more moisture there are plenty of alders and willows. Whereas there are still numerous oak woods (or “fragas”, in Galician), the chestnut groves have almost disappeared from Beariz: they used to cover vast areas in high lands, but were substituted by more profitable species, like the pine tree.

Once we go past the “fraga”, we enjoy our first view over the valley. Places that were seen up close before will now be watched from afar, and the small villages of Alén, Xirazga and Doade will be revealed with clarity.

The trail that we will follow in our ascent is surrounded by gorse and thicket. Nowadays this species grows everywhere, but in the past it was used to feed the animals, to cover the stable’s floor and become manure, and to stoke the fire. The gorse used to grow in high lands of collective and unclear ownership, and the right to harvest it was sometimes the cause of disputes between the villages.

Further up a new scenic view on the valley unfolds. The municipality of Beariz comprises several valleys that stretch from the north to the south and whose waters gather in streams that flow into the Avia. From this spot we have a full view of the valley where the parishes of Xirazga and Doade are.



STAGE 1

THE ASCENT TO THE OUTEIRO DA CRUZ

At the top of the mountain we find the “Outeiro da Cruz” (the hill of the cross in English), right at the northern border of the valley and of the municipality of Beariz. In the north lies Forcarei. Before crossing the paved road, we may take plenty of water from the spring on our left.

The atrium of the chapel of Saint Dominic is the site of a very devotional celebration on the 4th of August. Lots of people come up here and pray to the saint for favors, whom they fill with bills and surround with candles whose different shapes represent the requested favors.

In front of the church there is a “mámoa” with an information sign. This is a funerary monument consisting of some big stone slabs arranged in a small corridor and chamber, and others on top of these acting as roof. The “mámoas” used to be covered by soil, but many of them were unearthed with the intention of plundering the treasures that some legends have said they hide.

From the chapel we go up the road to the “Outeiro Grande” (the big hill in English), where we may see horses grazing freely. “Outeiro Grande” is the name given to a group of rounded mountain tops that make the northern border of the Serra do Suido. On our way to the top it is still possible to see the marks of old mining exploitations. The municipality of Beariz is rich in tin, a well-paid element until the end of World War II. Afterwards, in the years following the Spanish Civil War, there was a mass migration from Beariz mainly to Mexico.

Soon we see another valley stretching towards the south, the most distant one in the parish of Beariz. In this case the river running through the deep and wooded valley does not flow into the Avia, but into the Verdugo. This stream will continue flowing towards the southeast and finally into the Atlantic Ocean, right in the ria of Vigo. The Verdugo owes its name to its waters’ greenness (“verdor” in Spanish) when it becomes most plentiful and abounds in algae. The original Galician name was “Verdugo”, but it was translated erroneously into Spanish, thus causing misinterpretations of its meaning (the Spanish word “verdugo” means executioner).

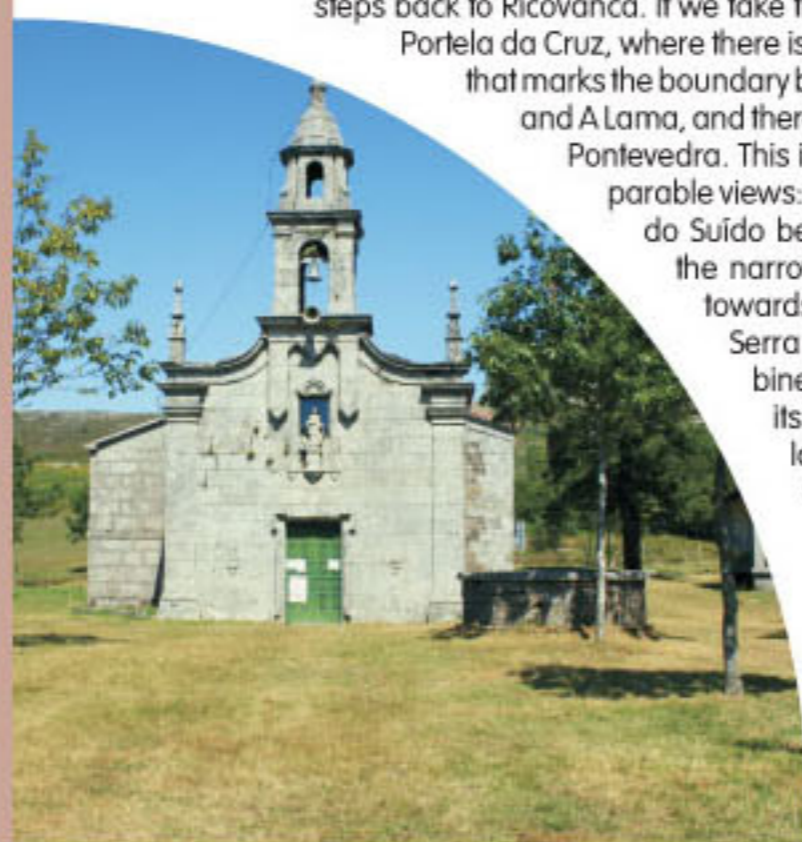
Following the marks in the route we get to a small road where we have to turn left to arrive—1 km. later—to the village of Ricovanca.

Just before entering the village there is a unique “hórreo”, the only one in the municipality of Beariz which is completely made of stone. The visit to Ricovanca is a must.

We shall walk along its narrow streets and leave this small village on the opposite side of it, where a nice traditional path will lead us for a few meters to the river. In a confined space we discover a small kind of paradise, remarkable for its nature, history and architecture. It is worth sitting down under the chestnut trees, the oaks and the birches for a while, to cool down and admire some of the river species (e.g. insects and amphibians). The path takes us to a medieval bridge which in fact is a Roman bridge rebuilt in the Middle Age. This bridge is part of a road that used to link the Ribeiro to Santiago de Compostela: the Vreiro road. It run far from the town in the border of the various ecclesiastical jurisdictions, so that the muleteers could avoid paying the taxes and tolls imposed to them for using the roads.

The water mill still keeps all the machinery that makes it work. The grains are put in a wooden receptacle at the top of it, and the vibration transmitted through the stick hitting the big round stone makes them fall little by little into the center. Here the grains are milled, and the flour slips out through the stone’s edge and falls in the bigger wooden compartment underneath.

From the medieval bridge—and after returning the key to the miller—we retrace our steps back to Ricovanca. If we take the exit on the right we will get to the Portela da Cruz, where there is a buried “mámoa”: a small mound that marks the boundary between the municipalities of Beariz and A Lama, and therefore the provinces of Ourense and Pontevedra. This is a crossroad which offers incomparable views: to the south, one can see the Serra do Suido becoming higher; to the southwest, the narrow valley of the Verdugo wriggling towards the Rías Baixas; to the west, the Serra do Seixo with its modern wind turbines; and to the east, Beariz with its soft mountain tops and the long valleys, which, along with their streams, rise in the northernmost point of the municipality, the mountains of the Candán.



STAGE 2

FROM THE CHAPEL OF SAINT DOMINIC TO THE PORTELA DA CRUZ



We now turn left following the road to Doade, which we will leave 50 meters later to take the trail on the right. This trail offers sensational views of the southern part of the municipality of Beariz, making out in the distance the villages of Doade, A Bouza a bit farther, and Correa in the north.

After following down a firewall, we go in the shade of many oaks and birches that will lead us to the river. There is no bridge but, since the waters are shallow, a pair of waterproof shoes or simply jumping from one stone to another would suffice. This place gives us the opportunity to enjoy the riverbank’s fauna in all its splendor: here it is not difficult to see the small trouts, and the dragonflies adorn the peaceful summer evenings. Frogs, salamanders, newt, butterflies, common pondskaters and birds alike invite you to sit down for a while and admire the richness of this heavenly place.

Our next stop is the fluvial beach in Doade, where we will have a spring, a bathing area, tables in the shade and grass to relax a bit before facing the last 4 kilometers of the route.

The next stretch in our journey will take us to Doade, following a shadowy road full of oaks and chestnut trees for 1.5 kilometers.

The field for the Fair of Doade has an amazing oak wood and, next to the chapel, there is a “cruceiro” with a “peto de ánimas”. “Peto” means moneybox, and here you leave alms for the souls in the purgatory. We follow the road to Beariz for about 100 meters, when a street on our left shows us a house with a “cruceiro”. To continue our journey we shall take the road on the left side of this house.

This old and damped cart path is surrounded by a lush forest whose oaks’ grateful shade incites to rest, but the end of the route in Correa is close. On our way, walking between old stone walls, we will encounter rare species, like the holly. Those who like mushrooms should be alert, for the high level of moisture in this area makes them grow throughout most of the year.

At the end of this road we arrive at the church of Xirazga again. It is here in Correa where the route started, and here also finishes a walk that has allowed us to get to know the westernmost area of Beariz, going round one of the long valleys which characterize this municipality.



STAGE 3

THE DESCENT TO THE RIVER AND DOADE

