



VALLEYS OF CANTABRIA GEOPARK PROJECT

The project application of UNESCO World Geoparks “Valleys of Cantabria” is a contribution to a socio-economic sustainable development of the territory, based on the exceptional value of its geological heritage and all its cultural and natural resources.

All of this, carried out under a cooperation methodology and the participation of different organizations that, for more than 20 years, have been developing actions to encourage the socio-economic development of the territory using measures regarding promotion, added value and conservation.

With this form’s development UNESCO, the aim is to improve the economic activity on a sustainable development which should help the creation of opportunities in the territory (geotourism, geo-food, etc), as the 47,3% of the municipalities (52,2% of the territory) which are included in this project, have been declared, by the regional government as Cantabria’s rural area at risk of depopulation.

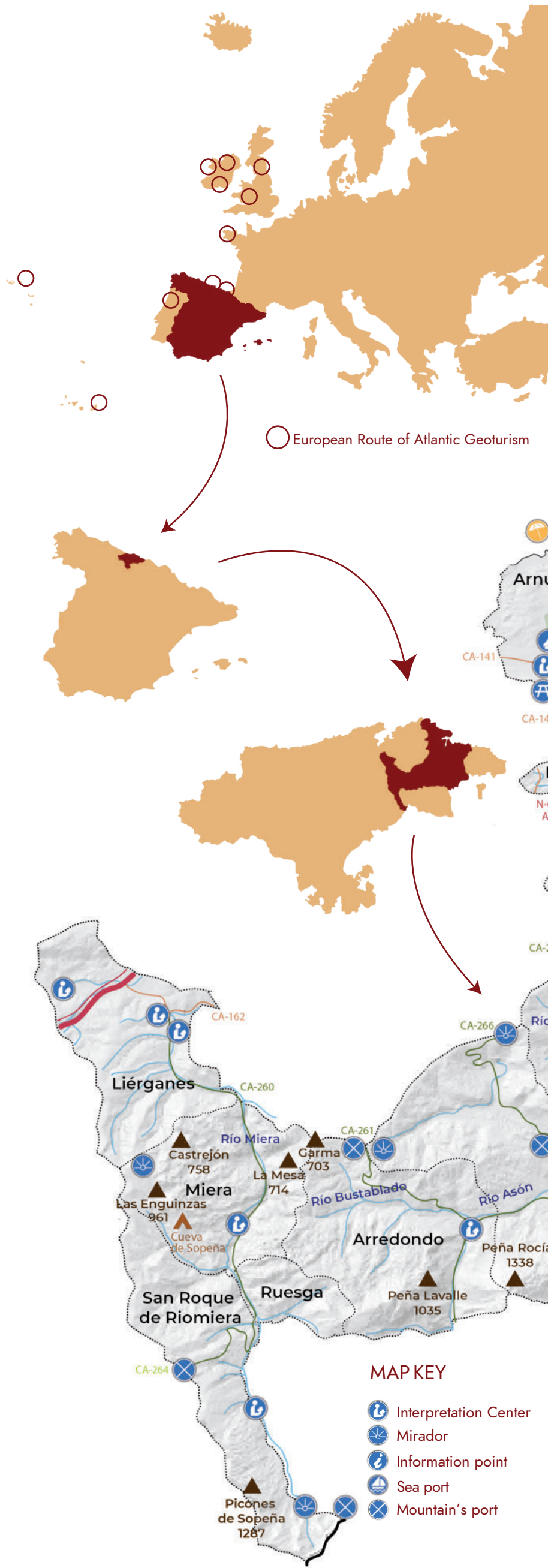
In the same way, it is considered fundamental to continue with the development of education activities related to geological and natural environment. These activities shall be developed as geo-conservation actions in order to ensure the preservation and enjoyment of these geological places and extremely valuable landscapes through the geotourism.

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WHERE ARE WE?



EUROPEAN ROUTE OF ATLANTIC GEOTURISM

The European culture itineraries show, through a time and space journey how the heritage of different European regions and cultures, contributes to a shared and living cultural heritage.

For this reason, from, the “Valleys of Cantabria” Geopark project, together with the “Trás-os-Montes y Alto Douro University (Portugal), nine UNESCO World Geoparks from Europe (Arouca and Azores in Portugal, Basque Coast, Lanzarote islands and Chini-jo in Spain, Copper Coast, Marble Arch Caves and Burren and Moher cliffs in Ireland, Forest Fawr and North Pennines in United Kingdom) and Armorique, (France) the applicant Geopark, the candidature of European Cultural itinerary of the European Route of Atlantic Geotourism has been presented.

That route is a tour through twelve wonderful geological, nature and culture destinations in the European Atlantic area.

This route will be added to the European Cultural existing itineraries which run in the “Valleys of Cantabria” Geopark project: “Camino de Santiago” or “Camino del Norte”, “Caminos del Arte Rupestre Prehistórico” and “Ruta Europea del Emperador Carlos V”.

A new itinerary that guides us through different territories, countries, habitats, languages and cultures. Providing a high quality experience, helping to boost the local economies and thereby, to protect its imposing natural landscapes.

Every destination has an exciting history of its geology as well as of its life forms, as an engine of a sustainable tourism together with the agricultural, livestock, fisheries, crafts, cultural and business sector.



AMPUERO

Ampuero is located fringed by the Asón River, declared a Special Conservation Area, and its tributary “el Vallino” in every corner, in a way which offers a perfect environment in contact with nature and it’s also a perfect area to sports activities such as canoeing and fishing, or hiking and speleology, emphasizing “La Cueva de los Tocinos”.

Candiano, with 500 metres of altitude, is one of the most important summits around Ampuero’s Valley and the privileged, viewpoint, from which we can enjoy the best panoramic views of the mouth of the Asón, Treto River and Limpias.



ARGOÑOS

Argoños is a plain territory, with fertile lands, the banks are characterized by their strong cantabric tides, and because of them the landscape changes due to the number of arms of the river around the village, which is farming and fishing in equal proportion.

Its river contains extremely interesting ecosystems, which are protected within the Natural Park of Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes.

Farming and fishing activities are maintained, which are the base of a delicious gastronomy and, at the same time, thanks to the excellent communications, the population who chooses this village is increasing, looking for a higher standard of living, enjoying the quiet of a privileged environment.



ARNUERO

The municipality of Arnuelero is appreciated for its beautiful beaches and gastronomy, principally based on grove’s products, such as its famous “caricos” or the Isla’s pepper and, in sea products, Isla’s crawfish and lobster coming from natural incubator of the area, are the main indications of a long tradition gastronomic culture.

The municipality, has developed an important restoration project and the enhancement of its cultural and natural heritage, where we can find the “Ecoparque de Trasmiera”, a unique space with a perfect combination of natural, cultural and touristic territory, whose management model has been awarded many times.

DEVELOPERS

The “Valleys of Cantabria” Geopark project, UNESCO World Geoparks applicant, promoted by “Mancomunidad de Municipios Sostenibles” of Cantabria, with the Cantabrian Government and University of Cantabria support, is being currently promoted within the framework of the European Project ATLANTIC-GEOPARKS, co-financed by the Transnational Cooperation Programme Interreg Atlantic Area through the European Regional Development Fund.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Councils, the Cantabria Network of Rural Development, GAL Asón-Agüera-Trasmiera, GAL Valles Pasiegos, “GAC Oriental de Cantabria”, “Mancomunidad de Municipios del Alto Asón” and “Mancomunidad de Municipios de los Valles Pasiegos”.





ARREDONDO

It is known as “the capital of the world” because of the number of people from this territory who departed for America.

Its neoclassical church is overlooked by an enormous cylindrical tower, visible from everywhere and, as the story tells, used by its owner to catch a glimpse of the sea. Other notable monuments are the country chapel San Juan de Socueva (tenth century), and the Gothic style chapel of Los Santos Mártires (sixteenth century).

It has also an extraordinary underground development, with over than 251 catalogued cavities and systems such as Cueto-Coventosa, which becomes speleology another important incentive.



LAREDO

It is situated in a big bay in the mouth of Asón river, it has a very beautiful and extraordinary varied landscapes. Part of its territory takes part in the Natural Park of Santoña Marshes. Fantastic beaches of fine sand, big dune areas and spectacular rocky cliffs can be enjoyed.

Besides enjoying its natural splendour, it’s possible to travel back to the past in “La Puebla Vieja”, where impressive mansions were built between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The gothic Temple of “La Asunción” is located there, it was built between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries and there is an altarpiece from Belén, one of the Flemish polychromed sculpture treasures. The “Puebla Vieja” was designated Historic-Artistic Site in 1970.



MIERA

This municipality is called as the river which runs through it, forming a narrow valley. Its economic activity is based on the livestock farming, with a predominance of Dutch cattle. The livestock farming is complemented by forestry and in the lowlands, by agriculture, especially corn, beans and potatoes.

From the historical point of view, the first evidence of human habitation in Miera date from the Quaternary, as three important prehistoric caves can demonstrate (“Rascaño” in Mirones, “Piélagos” in Mortesante and “Cuevas del Salitre” in Ajanedo neighbourhood), where red and black paintings and fossil fauna with bears and other animals bones have been found.



RUESGA

The Municipality of Ruesga, is separated from the Soba Valley by an orographic wall (Castrovalnera, Collado de las Lobas, Alisas), which didn’t prevent a common historical development until recently. In Ogarrío we can visit the most important monument of the municipality: San Miguel Church (fifteenth century) and in the valley the “Virgen de los Milagros” sanctuary, the Patron Saint. Here there are also the big mansions of distinguished surnames, such as the mansion of Arrendondo and the Lusa cave, where many weapons from Bronze Age were found. In Matienzo there is a big geological interest Polje (natural depression on the land over a kilometer wide). Lately a schism with a several drop of 435 meters (one of the deepest in the world) has been discovered, and it’s called “Gran Pozo MTDE”.

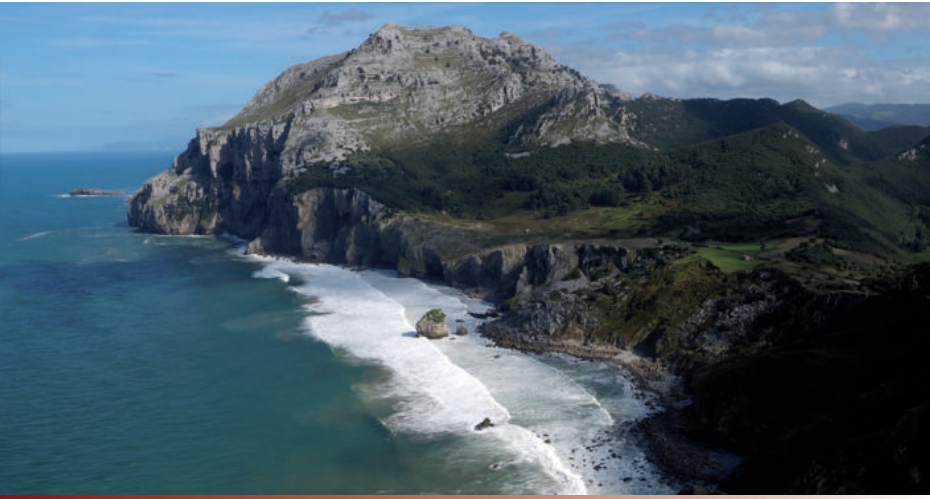


BÁRCENA DE CICERO

It’s located in the southwest of Santoña’s Bay, its main monuments are the parish Church of Bárcena de Cicero (seventeenth century), which is part of an interesting group of monuments including the mansions of Londoño, Rugama and Mazarredo. Treto estuary connects it with the sea and its activities.

Treto is located in the riverside of the estuary, at the beginning of the mouth of Asón River. It is connected with Colindres by an striking iron bridge, built in 1901 by the Eiffel company.

Although it seems to be a humanized landscape, its natural resources of high environmental value are protected by the Natural Park of Santoña’s marshes.



LIENDO

The municipality of Liendo is located in the East Coast, in a lovely and green valley divided in many neighbourhoods.

This valley is located between two of the most touristic municipalities of Cantabria (Laredo and Castro Urdiales).

Around Hazas, the municipal capital, are the other 12 neighbourhoods. The waterline is so rough, it offers the highest cliffs of the territory, and because of this there are two small beaches, San Julián and Sonabia. The access to this last beach is from Oriñón, in Castro Urdiales.



NOJA

Located between the Quejo estuary and the Mount Brusco, its coast is composed of two beaches, Trengandín and Ris.

Apart from its extraordinary coast, it has other appreciated attributes with many examples of civil architecture such as “Marqués de Albaicín” palace, that was declared a cultural object, where The Culture House, the “Casa-palacio de los Venero” and Velasco’s or Garnika’s Mansions are located.

The parish church of Noja (seventeenth century), is the best exponent of religious architecture. Among these architectures, particular attention should be paid Victoria Mill, built in 1629.



SAN ROQUE DE RIOMIERA

San Roque de Riomiera is one of the three “villas pasiegas”. It is a predominantly stockbreeding area with rich pastures at the foot of Portillo de Lunada. Due to its altitude, in winter this is a beautiful spot and copious snowfalls are recorded.

The dispersal of the population is so common in this region. Although there is no doubt that landscapes and rural settlements are its main attractive, San Roque de Riomiera has also some artistic manifestations such as the parish church of La Pedrosa, built in the seventeenth century but with many reforms after that.



COLINDRES

Colindres, is a municipality with many enriching contrasts. Its privileged location, is an historic crossroads between the sea and the mountains, which favored from yesteryear, the development of a rich heritage along them.

There are mansions attesting the strong lineage of their residents, from nineteenth century small palaces to the purest modernist, and a coastal landscape protected as Natural Park that coexists with the traditional tasks of our people, fishing and shipbuilding industry, which represents the interaction of the Colindres with nature. A place where everyone who arrives finds his space.



LIÉRGANES

Liérganes is the capital of the municipality with the same name, its urban complex was declared national historical-artistic interest in 1978, where a valuable classicist architecture of the 17th and 18th centuries is concentrated, which is the result of the economic boom of the artillery factory. Its urban area is located at the foot of two small elevations Marimon and Cotillamón (popularly known as “Las Tetas de Liérganes”).

Liérganes and its history are linked to the legend of the “Hombre Pex”, which, like all legends, has something real and something fictional. Undeniable is also the duality between Liérganes and its spa that, which set in a magnificent property of stately woodland, has a characteristically 19th century air.



RAMALES DE LA VICTORIA

This municipality is located in a mid-mountain environment at the foot of the San Vicente peak. Its name comes from: “Ramales”, on the one hand, it is the place where the Asón and Gándara rivers meet and, on the other hand, Calera y Carranza; and “de la Victoria” because of the battle of Guardamino where General Espartero defeated the Carlist army. Ramales has a well preserved popular architecture with glazed balconies and several indian (returning emigrants) houses, with beautiful gardens. The Revillagigedo palace (XVIII century) is also very important. However, its most valuable heritage are the caves: Covalanas (World Heritage Site by UNESCO), La Haza, Cullalvera and Sotarriza that house cave paintings inside.



SANTOÑA

It’s located in the eastern sector of Cantabria, in the bay that takes its name and at the foot of Mount Buciero, and its location makes it a singular destination. In the north it borders Berria Beach, in the south with San Martín Beach, in the east with mount Buciero and in the west with the fishing port and the marsh.

The Natural Park of Santoña, Victoria and Joyel Marshes, with more than 4,000 hectares of high environmental value, is considered one of the most important hot spot of bio-diversity in Spain, with more than 20,000 birds belonging to 120 different species (some of them come from the North of Europe and spend here the winter), small mammals and unique flora.



ESCALANTE

Its landscapes combine the green landscapes and marshes and the blue seas, chaired by Montehano, its most emblematic mountain elevation. Its economy is based on agricultural activities, such as the production of cider, which, in the last few years, has acquired an increased substantially.

The oldest memorials of population in Escalante are located in Montehano hill, a strategic place that allows visual control of the Asón estuary area. Subsequently, the castle was built in this place and the monastery of the same name was founded.

There are various religious buildings in the municipality, including the small hermitage of San Román, from the 1200 year.



LIMPIAS

It is located on the bank of Limpías estuary, part of the mouth of the Asón River, which is crucial to the development of the region. The historical development of this town was exacerbated as early as 15th century by its geographical location and its progressive port activity, when it became one of the key points which linked the seaport of Laredo and Castilla.

A beautiful complex, that is worthwhile visiting, is constituted by the narrow road that cut across the urban center, with its crowded houses, the “San Vicente de Paul” school and the hermitage of “La Piedad”.

The name of this municipality is always mentioned together with the miraculous image of “Santo Cristo de la Agonia”.



RASINES

Rasines is located in the middle stretch of the Asón region, it’s a municipality with a great underground systems development such as the Silencio River with 53 km of galleries, the Picón Carlista massif and many caves for speleological activities, highlighting the Valley Cave, in Helguera, which provides evidence of man dating back to Paleolithic times.

As far as secular architecture is concerned, the churches of San Martín in Cereceda and San Andrés in Rasines, where several mansions are particularly interesting.



VOTO

The capital of Voto is Bádames, it’s part of the Trasmiera region and is settled on the Valle de Aras, which cross the Clarín and Clarión rivers. Voto isn’t a coastal town, but the waters of the Cantabrian Sea enter in the valley through the Carasa and Rada estuaries, included within the Natural Park.

Its lands and crops are so fertile thanks to influence of the Asón Valley, which is rich in ecosystems and natural resources. Different excavations have shown the quaternary origin of its first settlements. This is evidenced by the Cibrantes cave, in San Miguel de Aras. We can’t forget about Chora and Otero caves, in San Pantaleón de Aras and Secadura, respectively.