

english



RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN ARAGÓN

◀ Front: Picture of the Virgin of El Pilar



▲ Humilladero del Pilar (El Pilar Shrine), Saragossa

▲ Ntra. Sra. de los Ángeles, Torreciudad

▲ Corporales, Daroca

▲ Road to Santiago

ARAGÓN

GENERAL INFORMATION

ARAGON is one of the seventeen Autonomous Regions of Spain. It is located in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula, equidistant of nearly everything and always close (only some seventy-five minutes from Madrid and Barcelona, thanks to the high-speed train). With 47,724 square kilometers, this old kingdom, which once was one of the oldest nations of Europe, has more than 1,200,000 inhabitants nowadays. On the whole, tenacious people, as kind as warm, with a sarcastic humor and noble intentions.

It will take your breath away, but Aragon is a land that breathes history. If you follow the thousand-year-old marks, you will realize that, in this community of contrasts, Christians, Jewish and Muslims have lived together. Get ready because your adventure starts.

LOCATION



A photograph of the interior of La Seo, Saragossa, showing a large, ornate altar with a golden canopy and a large, arched window in the background. The foreground features wooden pews and a stone wall.

◀ *The inside of La Seo, Saragossa*

TO the north, the Pyrenees; to the south, the Iberian System and, in the centre, the River Ebro and all its tributaries. Huesca, Teruel, and Saragossa. This land and its contrasts will knock you senseless and, at the same time, with your entire senses alert.

THE FAITH IN ARAGÓN

RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Come to Aragon and cover the Marian Route. Only five hours by road separate the Basilica of El Pilar of Saragossa from the Lourdes Sanctuary, passing by Torreciudad. A way of faith, art, and culture that more and more people pass by. You will find parishioners, groups, and families from the entire world that want to know God better and ask the Virgin for breath and encouragement.

You will be met by unique natural spaces, castles, churches and art works, together with the traditions and the delicious gastronomic offers that will make your journey unforgettable. The Marian Route can be an intermediate point if you come from or go towards other destinations like Fátima, Monserrat, or Compostela.

You can be led by the Road to Santiago. On foot, by car, cycling or riding a horse, to be a pilgrim will change your life. Check it yourself. However, do not leave Aragon without paying a visit to Daroca. The miracle of the Holy Corporals turn this charming city into one of the most important pilgrimage centers of the Christendom in the XIV century. Now it is your turn.

EL PILAR OF ZARAGOZA



▲ El Pilar, Saragossa

PAY A VISIT TO SARAGOSSA

The Virgin came in mortal body to Saragossa. The tradition speaks for itself to all and sundry. It is said that the Apostle James (*Santiago*) was discouraged next to the River Ebro and Mary arrived to encourage him in her Christianization work. Comforted, James and the first converted ones would set off from Saragossa in order to preach all over Spain. Two thousand years have already gone by.

Have you heard about the Calanda miracle? In 1640, a young man that begged recovered an amputated and buried leg thanks to the intercession of the Virgin. The devotion knows no bounds.

THE “PILLAR”

Nowadays, a gorgeous baroque basilica guards the “Pillar” where the Mother of Hispanic World leaned on. It is a shaft of jasper covered in bronze and silver crowned by an elegant Gothic fruit-tree wood sculpture that symbolizes Mary with the Child. Have a good look at the characteristic cloak that she wears. The first one we have written evidence of dates from 1504. She wears a different one every day, with the exception of the days 2, 12 and 20 of every month. Do you want to know why? On January 2, the arrival of the Virgin is commemorated, the Pilar Feast is on October 12, and on May 20, the canonical coronation is celebrated. The most special cloak is the one that is weaved every October 12 with millions of flowers and feelings from the offerers that come from all around the world.

With such special location, it is not surprising that some remains that belong to a small Visigothic temple have been founded under the Basilica of Nuestra Señora del Pilar, as well as a Romanesque church that was burned down and a Gothic-Mudejar cathedral that was demolished. From this last one, you can still admire pieces of Mudejar woodwork, the monumental stalls, and the spectacular alabaster altarpiece signed by Damián Forment.

In the XVII century, the devotion was such that it was decided to design a new building by its neighboring, El Salvador Cathedral, La Seo. No sooner said than done. With San Pedro de Roma in mind, the present spacious, bright, light, and beautiful Baroque basilica was finished

▼ Flowers offering, October 12



▲ La Seo, Saragossa



▲ Rosario de Cristal (Crystal Rosary), Saragossa



▲ El Pilar Holy Chapel

in the XVIII century. One hundred and fifty meters long by seventy meters wide. You can spend hours gazing at the domes, two of which were painted by the young Goya, the brilliant Aragonese artist.

All the eyes look at the Holy Chapel (*Santa Capilla*) devised by Ventura Rodríguez, with its three curved porticoes with classicistic entablatures and pediments in the main front and the solid wall dotted with three altars. In one of them, the Holy Image over the Pillar (*Santa Imagen Sobre la Columna*) stands out on its own. The dazzling Virgin of El Pilar is waiting for you there, with her imperial crown and a diamond aureole. By her, some of her many cloaks that have been offered by the faithful that, moreover, reserve the candles that have the purest wax for the candelabras that the angels of Camarín de la Virgen carry.

In the outside, the unmistakable brick silhouette crowned by a flood of domes and four very high towers that will welcome you when you arrive at Saragossa.

RELIGION WITH ART.

Here, you will find religion with a lot of art. El Pilar Square is the one of the Cathedrals. In addition, the reason is that Saragossa has two cathedral churches. If you have already seen the Basilica, do not leave without admiring its neighbor. La Seo is one of the richer and more stylish temples of Spain. Subjected to constant alterations and extensions, the collection could not be more harmonious, bright and varied, both in the inside and in the outside. The external wall and the coffered ceiling of Parroquieta de San Miguel are two Mudejar gems that were given the status of World Heritage Site by the UNESCO, included in the declaration of

all the Aragonese Mudejar. That is history! Take the opportunity to go for a walk around its tapestries museum, a real gem.

You should also pay a visit to other Basilica, the Santa Engracia one, which keeps the remains of the Saint and the chapel of the martyrs of the roman persecution. More Baroque churches that will impress you are the San Carlos and La Mantería ones. The ones that boast about Mudejar towers, rightly, are the ones of La Magdalena, San Pablo, San Miguel, and San Gil.

There is much more. The walls or the fantastic Roman Theatre still remain from the Caesaraugusta that was founded on the banks of the Ebro. From the Taifas period, La Aljafería, the Happiness Palace (*El Palacio de la Alegría*), with its crenelated towers, arches and wells. The Renaissance and Baroque palaces will arrive later, with their unmistakable Aragonese style very Italianizing and the museums. Pay a visit to the Goya Area and the great bequeath, among others, in the Aula Dei Charterhouse, the Remolinos church or the House where the painter was born in Fuendetodos.

The lakes that form in the meanders abandoned by the Ebro, a hundred per cent natural pieces of work. They are called gullies (*galachos*) and you can find them a stone's throw away from Saragossa, in Juslibol and La Alfranca, where the birds feel like home. Inside the city, the father of all the parks is the one of Primo de Rivera.

Festive airs do also blow in the capital of the North Wind. Live the Holy Week with passion, characterized by its sobriety and spirituality, and save yourself some days in October for the Feasts of El Pilar. The flowers and fruits offerings, as well as the shiny Crystal Rosary, fill the streets with light, color, and flavor. Make the most of them.

THE SANCTUARY OF TORRECIUDAD

IT IS IN ALTOARAGON.

Torreciudad pokes out in the middle of a beauty natural landscape over El Grado reservoir, sheltered by the Pyrenees. Right there, the Aragonese occupied a Muslim fort and erected a chapel to venerate the Virgin in the XI century. There was a signs tower next to it and its name comes from it.

The sanctuary you will find was erected between 1970 and 1975 thanks to the effort of San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, who was from Barbastro, and the help of thousands of people. The founder of the Opus Dei wanted to re-boost a very old local devotion. Nowadays, it is an international pilgrimage centre where more than half million faithful go every year in order to pray and make it up with God.

THE FAMILY SANCTUARY (SANTUARIO DE LA FAMILIA)

Fitted into the landscape, the Sanctuary is an impressive brick building faithful to the traditional Aragonese style, a work of the architect Heliodoro Dols. Its solid tower will catch your attention. Remember that you are in Torreciudad. In the inside, have a good look at the Romanesque picture of Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, which was already in that first chapel of the XI century. You will also find a spectacular alabaster altarpiece, work of the sculptor Joan Mayné, as well as many chapels dedicated to the Holy Family, Loreto, el Pilar, and Guadalupe.

The walls do not clash with the landscape ones. A place that merges the modern with the classic is cozy from people of all ages. In September, during the Marian Courses dedicated to the families, more that forty thousand people can assemble in only one day. From the rural world, immigrants, housewives, social voluntary service, from the sports world... People that want to bring the Christian spirit closer to the whole society and that chooses Torreciudad in order to celebrate the wedding anniversaries, pray for some problem or just to offer the birth of a child.

Altarpiece and High Altar of Torreciudad

THE SURROUNDINGS.

If you want to find yourself, look for yourself in contact with nature. You will nearly be able to be reflected on the clear waters of El Grado reservoir, a paradise for water sports. What to say about the fussy gullies cut on the rocks of the Mountain Range and the Guara Canyons Nature Park (*Parque Natural de la Sierra y los Cañones de Guara*). Stop at Alquézar. A beauty fairy-tale place with a collegiate church, walled premises, and the remains of an old Muslim castle.

With art, Aínsa, a beauty Pyrenean medieval village that boasts about a castle, a Romanesque church, and streets that invite going for an unforgettable walk. Pay a visit to Monzón and its impressive castle, Barbastro with its renaissance cathedral and the house where San José María Escrivá de Balaguer was born. In Graus, try the famous spicy pork sausage. Moreover, in order to water it, the Somontano suggests its delicious Guarantee of Origin wines.

With party flavor, the traditional Carnivals of Bielsa, enveloped in the ancient costumes and "La Morisma" of Aínsa that is celebrated in September. The clay turns into art since many years ago in Naval. In this area, the contact with the earth acquires other dimensions.

THE ROAD TO SANTIAGO

STEP by step along Aragon. The French, the Catalans, the Valencian. All the roads lead to the Apostle's tomb. Make the French route yours. The oldest entrance to Aragon from the Pyrenees was the Roman road that crossed El Palo pass and went along the Hecho Valley where the impressive Monastery of San Pedro de Siresa was erected. This branch and the one that goes down the Ansó Valley will impress you with beauty spots like Zuriza, the Oza Forest and picturesque villages before descending along the Berdún Canal.

Nevertheless, the starting point of the French road changed many years ago, the oldest and the better preserved one. Once you have gotten over the border, you are in the door or, let's say, in the

▲ San Pedro de Siresa



▼ Aínsa

Somport Pass. Down the valley, the ruins of what used to be one of the three most important hospitals of the trip toward "Finis Terrae" will meet you, the Santa Cristina one. You will be surprised by the modern hotel and catering installations of the Candanchú winter resort and the beauty landscapes with or without snow. Very close, you will be able to see the remains of a castle that used to be a shelter for the pilgrims and where the merchants paid their tolls.

Head for the south until arriving at the impressive international railway station; have a good look at the Fort of Coll de Ladronec and at the church and Romanesque bridge that rises over the River Aragon, in Canfranc. It is the typical village that was organized on both sides of the "pilgrimage's towrope". The valley widens and you



▲ Ciudadela de Jaca



▼ San Adrián de Sasave

arrive at Villanúa, which boasts about its prehistoric caves and dolmens, about the church and the one of San Vicente de Aruej, which is waiting for you in a slightly lower place, in a discreet area, set back from the road.

It is worth straying off a bit toward Aratorés or Borau, going past San Adrián de Sasave, a beauty monastery whose walls contain thousands of stories. In La Garcipollera, Nuestra Señora de Iguácel.

Castiello de Jaca has a castle name. Apart from its rough medieval appearance, the church and the chapel of Santa Juliana stand out. Going past the Torrijos Bridge, with the view of Jaca as background, enjoy another chapel, the San Cristóbal one. Some steps more, just before entering the city of Jaca, was the Health Hospital (*Hospital de la Salud*), a place where so many leprous pilgrims passed by. Nowadays, only a capital exhibited in a healthy walk remains, a total of two kilometers swarming with trees, birds, freshness and panoramic views that will make you fall in love. From here, the travelers went through the walled building that was still standing around the middle of the XIX century, with its seven doors and twenty-three towers.

In Jaca, as a good pilgrim, you should pay a visit to the Cathedral of San Pedro, which dates from the XI century. It has three naves and a Latin-cross plan; it had an influence on other big monuments that belong to the road. You are attending the birth of the Jaca's checker pattern, the place where a great number of sculptures and capitals shine with their own light. You will find a monogram of Christ that represents the change of life that those that cover this path pursuit in the tympanum of its main front. Just under it, on both sides of the door, there is a pair of columns. On the one located on the left you will find a big fissure on the rock caused by the kisses of thousands of pilgrims throughout history. Inside, in the Diocesan Museum, you will find one of the best samples of the Romanesque painting of the world. However, there is much more. Go for a walk around the church of Santiago and around the Benedictines Monastery, where the sepulcher of Mrs. Sancha, the daughter of the king Ramiro, is located. Before continuing with your walk, come closer to the Town Hall (*Casa Consistorial*), the Clock Tower (*Torre del Reloj*), the Citadel (Ciudadela), or the Bridge of San Miguel. Become imbued with the atmosphere that you can feel in this place and get some fresh air in its so many parks and gardens, always green.

When leaving Jaca, head towards the Monastery of San Juan de la Peña, witness of the birth of the Aragon

▲ Jaca Cathedral



▲ *Holy Grail (reproduction)*

Kingdom and of the Holy Grail's passage. Look for the Old Monastery (*Monasterio Viejo*) under an impressive rock. The Benedictines founded it there in the IX century. This peculiar collection will confess you the damages that the fires and frosts caused it. They were so many that, at the end of the XVII century, the New Monastery (*Monasterio Nuevo*) had to be built next to it, in a sunnier grassland, the San Indalecio one. It was erected with overelaborate and excessively ornate fronts. Nowadays, it is a collection that has been fully restored by the Aragonese Government and that houses a guesthouse and a huge interpretation centre of what San Juan de la Peña was in the history of the Aragonese Kingdom. Have a look out of Balcón de los Pirineos (*Pyrenees Observation Point*). You will maybe find some of the lammergeyers, vultures, squirrels, deer and roe deer that frequent these spots.

Stray off the path toward Santa Cruz de la Serós, where can enjoy a careful popular architecture finished off with fabulous chimneys decorated with "scarewitches". Its two gems, also Romanesque, are the church of Santa María and the chapel of San Caprasio. Do you want more excitements?

Puente la Reina de Jaca is a crossroads. You have to choose between one bank and the other of the River Aragon. The right passes along harsh landscapes, full of pine trees until Berdún and Sigües, the uninhabited Esco and Tiermas, the Javier Castle, and you arrive at Sangüesa, already in lands of Navarre. Do not forget the Leyre Monastery. The other route is more recommendable for those that go walking. Without entering Puente la Reina, head toward Arrés, a small village with its cozy Hospital for Pilgrims. An example of the traditional youth hostel where you will be treated wonderfully. From there toward Martes, passing by uneven lands,



▲ *Santa Cruz de la Serós*

you will arrive at Mianos, Artieda, Ruesta and Undués de Lerda in order to also come out onto Sangüesa.

Along the path, you can find volunteers from several countries that register the pilgrims, put them the stamp and help them feel like home.

This is the main road, but you can choose other ones. If you want natural and in-stone art, from El Portalet, cross the comforting Tena Valley riddled with churches with a Romanesque and Mozarabic flavor: Gavín, Oliván, Susin, Busa and Larrede and, from there, toward Jaca or Huesca.

If you prefer the wonders of the landscape, the Bielsa tunnel will put you on the right track toward the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park, Aínsa toward Torreciudad and Barbastro or the Guara Canyons passing by Alquézar.

A bit more hidden but as beautiful, come through the Viella tunnel, slide along Benasque, which is sheltered by the highest peaks of Spain, until Graus or along the Ésera valley, passing by the Obarra Monastery and the Collegiate Church of Roda de Isábena. Barbastro and you are already in the velvety Somontano.

Apart from the French one, you can choose the Catalan routes or the Valencian one: all of them beautiful and riddled with legends and traditions of saints and lords, of wolves and bandits, sun and snow, alone or with company. History and memories. At one step, you will be dazzled by big cathedrals, monasteries, or castles and, at the next one, small fountains, chapels, and lovely spots will receive you. When you walk, you trace the path, give it sense, and fill it with life. You yourself and people from all over the world that share silences and landscapes, long, exhausting and comforting journeys. You are already part of the Road to Santiago.

THE HOLY CORPORALS OF DAROCA



THE four doors of Daroca will open when you come in order to show you a locality where several cultures embrace. It is said that, in the XIII century, it went so far as to have thirteen churches, five convents and a chapel. Many of those monuments have disappeared but the ones that are still standing are excellent samples of the Romanesque and the Gothic, the Mudejar, Renaissance and Baroque. In addition, that without taking into account the magnificent civil buildings, the walls, and the Muslim castle.

In the XIV century, many pilgrims headed for Daroca, the place that some time before, in 1239, had been witness of the Corporals miracle. In addition, since then up to date.

Do you want to know what happened? It seems that, during the conquest of Valence, the Christian troops of the area were about to win the Chio Castle, which was in the Arab's power. Before the battle, a mass was said. The chaplain had just consecrated half a dozen Hosts but, before the captains of the infantry regiments could have them, an attack triggered, what obliged to cancel the service. The chaplain wrapped the Hosts in the corporals and hid them under some rocks. Once the attack was over, he went to look for them and he found them covered with blood and stuck to the clothes. Each captain wanted to keep them their place of origin and, although the luck appointed Daroca three times, they decided to load the relic on a mule, leave it in the middle of nowhere, and approve the place where the animal stopped.

You have guessed it. After many steps, it ended death in Daroca. Nowadays, you will find the treasure in the Collegiate Church of the Holy Corporals. You could see them in the street in the Corpus Christy Feast. They go on procession, showered with rose petals. You will for sure meet warm people and spots that ooze legends. Have faith in Aragon.

TOURIST OFFICES (OPEN ALL YEAR ROUND)

Aragón tourism office (OPEN ALL YEAR ROUND)

Avda. César Augusto, 25. Tel. 976 28 21 81. ZARAGOZA

► www.turismodearagon.com

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