



NOBLE CALEDONIA

GALICIA'S CAMELLIA ROUTE

A week exploring the Gardens of Galicia
with Rosemary Legrand

14th to 20th March 2024



Santiago de Compostela

Galicia boasts the perfect conditions for the cultivation of camellias and is currently home to nearly 8000 varieties of this beautiful and enigmatic flower. Thought to have been brought from the East by Portuguese sailors, they were originally planted in the gardens of the grand country mansions, known as ‘pazos’, which were built by noble families in the 17th and 18th centuries and are typical of this region. We have timed our visit to coincide with the spring sunshine of March when the camellias are in bloom providing a welcome splash of colour in shades of white, pink and red against the backdrop of this pretty and relatively unexplored corner of North West Spain.

Every pazo garden contains luxuriant specimens and during our week’s visit we will explore some of the finest and most unique including the 54 hectare Pazo de Lourizan, with its botanical garden housing many notable species and the Baroque garden of Pazo de Oca, the “Galician Versailles” and a quintessential example of the Galician countryside home. There are also charming towns and architectural delights to be discovered along the way including Pontevedra, with its attractive old quarter and pretty squares, and of course Galicia’s loveliest city and famous pilgrimage centre – Santiago de Compostela with its exuberant Baroque cathedral and Medieval centre.

This is a tour for camellia lovers and indeed all garden enthusiasts with visits included to the region’s best gardens at the height of their season. Our programme will include comprehensive excursions as well as free time to relax from the comfort of the stunning, historic Paradors and appreciate the beautiful green scenery of Galicia. We will be joined by horticultural expert Rosemary Legrand, who will provide talks and briefings during the week and accompany us on excursions.

Guest Speaker – Rosemary Legrand



Rosemary is a former nursery owner and daughter of the late George Hyde, who was a hybridist of azaleas and rhododendrons. Many of his award-winning hybrid plants can be seen at the Royal Horticultural Society’s gardens at Wisley, Surrey, the de Rothschild rhododendron gardens at Exbury, Hampshire, and the National Trust Gardens at Kingston Lacy in Dorset. Rosemary had the honour of presenting the late Queen Elizabeth II with a collection of her

father’s azaleas named after the Queen’s former Head Gardener, Fred Nutbeam, at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1996. She has travelled extensively to gardens in many parts of the world and is an experienced public speaker. She is on the RHS Speakers Register and also speaks for NAFAS; she wrote a number of contributions for the book, ‘1001 Gardens you must see before you die’ and articles for Royal Horticultural Society publications.

The Itinerary

Day 1 London Gatwick to Porto, Portugal & Pontevedra, Spain. Fly by scheduled flight from London Gatwick to Porto. Upon arrival we leave Portugal and drive north to Pontevedra and check in to the Parador de Pontevedra, a centrally located 16th century palace, for our three night stay. Enjoy dinner at the hotel this evening.

Day 2 Pazo de Saleta & Gardens of Castle Sotomayor, Pontevedra. After breakfast we will drive to Pazo da Saleta. Here, we will find a five hectare English-style garden designed by landscape architect Brenda Colvin and see an octagonal dovecote surrounded by a forest of oaks, eucalyptus and cork oaks. The garden has many plants of exotic origin: rhododendrons, azaleas, members of the Australian sugarbush and myrtle families and South American heathers, along with many varieties of camellias with white, pink, red, purple, mottled and reticulated petals that fill the garden with colour to the beginning of spring. After lunch we visit the gardens of Castle of Sotomayor, which date back to the 12th century. The garden is home to 400 camellia plants of up to 25 different species,



Castle Sotomayor

some of which are centuries old. Return to our hotel in the afternoon and take a walking tour of Pontevedra, an elegant old town which has been shaped by a rich maritime and trading past. Amongst the sights we will see is the Peregrina Chapel, the city's most emblematic building. This Baroque church has an unusual rounded facade and was built in the late 18th century in honour of the Virgin guiding pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. Also see the 13/14th century Saint Francis Convent and Church. Legend has it the church was founded by Saint Francis himself.

Day 3 Pazo de Lourizan, O Grove & Martin Codax Winery, Pontevedra.

This morning we drive to the modernist building of Pazo de Lourizan and its large estate of 54 hectares. A striking element of the enclosure is the large Modernist design greenhouse made from metal and glass and a stone granary dating from 1798. The Botanical Garden houses both exotic and native species planted from the 19th century to the present. Of note are the Dutch elm, the queen palm and the avenue of magnolias. Next we will visit the village of O Grove where we board a small catamaran for a trip along the estuary. Our guide will explain all about the mussel farming that forms the backbone of the economy of this area and has made it quite famous. Sample fresh boiled mussels, a delicious, briny taste of the region whilst enjoying a splendid view of the estuary. Continue driving through this land of Albarino wine to visit the cellar of Martin Codax ending with a wine tasting and tapas lunch. After lunch we follow the road back to Pontevedra enjoying scenic views of the estuary and the coastline. Return to the hotel where we have dinner this evening.

Day 4 Pazo de Rubianes, Pontevedra & Santiago de Compostela.

After breakfast we visit the impressive Pazo de Rubianes, an elegant country estate dating back to the late 17th century and surrounded by extensive vineyards and centuries-old camellias in all colours: yellow, white, fuchsia and red. We visit the interior of the main building which, since its refurbishment in the 18th century, was converted into a pazo. Our tour ends with a taste of the local wines produced on site served with lunch. We depart for Santiago de Compostela and on arrival check in to the luxurious Parador de Santiago de Compostela for our three night stay. We take a walking tour through the Old Quarter visiting the cathedral which without a doubt is one of the great buildings of the world; its facade is a Baroque masterpiece, and there are even greater treasures within. We will end at the 80,000 square metre Alameda Gardens which was created in the 19th century and holds over fifty different species. This evening we will enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 5 Pazo de Faramello, Santiago de Compostela. After breakfast we drive to Pazo de Faramello, an early 18th century building with strong Italian influences that give away the Genoese origin of its founder, the Marquis of Piombino. This pazo was the location of the first paper factory in Galicia and

the old mills and its corresponding tools can still be visited. Admire the perfectly kept French 19th century gardens spread across more than two hectares leaning out in terraces over a tiny canyon whilst we enjoy lunch. We head back to our hotel and enjoy an afternoon at leisure.

Day 6 Pazo de Oca & Pazo de Ribadulla, Santiago de Compostela. Pazo de Oca, usually referred to as "Galician Versailles" is the final milestone of St. James's way. Originally a fortress dating from the 12th century, it was during the 18th century when Fernando Gayoso, Marquis of Camarasa transformed it into its current appearance of golden granite stone wall that evokes a forgotten paradise full of romanticism. Above all, the gardens at Oca are what astonish the most. Recently restored to its 18th century glory, the beauty here is the fusion of formal garden with working farm. This is a mossy, misty melancholic garden, wonderful in early spring when the legendary camellias come out. We then visit the Pazo de Ribadulla which dates back to the 1500s. The English-style gardens, which were laid out in the 19th century, are subtler and more natural than the French-style gardens of the Pazo de Oca and include a pretty waterfall and a wonderful grove of olive trees, some of which are nearly 300 years old. After lunch we return to our hotel and enjoy our final afternoon at leisure. This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel.

Day 7 Santiago de Compostela, La Coruna to London Heathrow. After breakfast we leave our hotel and head towards La Coruna. En-route we will visit Pazo de Marinan, an old Galician Manor with splendid French style gardens. There are beautiful groups of azaleas, aucuba specimens, camellias, spiraeas, ivies, roses, and also yew trees and centuries-old specimens of clethra. Our journey will end at a local restaurant, with a great view over the ocean, tasting local dishes paired with good wines. We then drive to La Coruna airport for our return scheduled flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	PRICE
Standard Room	£2895
Superior Room	£3195
Standard Room for sole use	£3395
Superior Room for sole use	£3795

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Three nights accommodation at Parador de Pontevedra • Three nights accommodation at Parador de Santiago de Compostela • Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily • Wine, beer and soft drinks with dinner • Tour Manager • Guest Speaker • Local guides • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

NB: Some of the excursions will include extended periods of walking including steps and over uneven terrain. We therefore do not recommend this tour for those with walking difficulties. Please also note that this tour departs from London Gatwick and returns to London Heathrow.

YOUR ACCOMMODATION



Parador de Pontevedra Jardin



Parador de Pontevedra – superior room



Parador de Pontevedra



Parador de Pontevedra



Parador de Pontevedra – standard room

PARADOR DE PONTEVEDRA

Located in the historic heart of Pontevedra, this impressive 16th century palace is classically decorated in true Parador style with an elegant restaurant serving delicious, regional cuisine including the wonderful fish and shellfish for which the region is famous. Meals may be accompanied by the excellent local Albarino, Ribeiro or Menica wines. Originally the residence of Count Maceda, the Parador de Pontevedra has been masterfully renovated to its past glory. Built of robust, local stone, the palace is surrounded by pretty landscaped gardens and a large sun terrace. The carved, stone staircase leads the way to the comfortable bedrooms furnished with antique-style decor and rich fabrics. The 47 rooms are air-conditioned with private bathrooms and the amenities include a minibar, safe, satellite TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, hairdryer and telephone. Relax in the elegant bar and lounge area while enjoying a drink or catch up with the day's newspapers.



Parador Santiago superior room



Parador Santiago restaurant



Parador Santiago restaurant

PARADOR DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

Claiming to be the oldest hotel in the world, the Parador Santiago de Compostela was built in 1499 by order of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Once a royal hospital, which provided lodging and shelter for many pilgrims who arrived in the city following the 'Camino de Santiago' the impressive building along with the Romanesque Cathedral beside it and the Plaza de Obradoiro have now been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site and are proclaimed as historic jewels. The Parador itself combines Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque elements which can be seen throughout the luxurious public areas, and bedrooms. The original hospital was built between 1499 and 1519 whilst the balconade and Baroque windows were added at the end of the 17th century. The Parador features four impressive cloisters and has a number of lounge areas for guests to relax in. The hotel's two restaurants feature exposed stone walls and candelabras. The Dos Reis serves a range of Mediterranean cuisine, while the Enxebre specialises in seafood and traditional Galician dishes. Each of the 137 spacious rooms spread over four floors offers classic decor with a private bathroom and modern comforts such as wooden/parqueted flooring, minibar, safe, satellite TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, hairdryer and telephone.

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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.

Cover image: Beautiful camellia bush in full bloom