

CALAHORRA

AND ITS PARADOR



EXCELLENT TO MAN'S LANDS

“... because from this country it would be possible to lead troops with the greatest of ease to any part of all of the Hispanias ...”

Livy

This city scarcely resembles what it once was; it has enjoyed and can well boast of noble prehistoric ancestors. These meadows were already populated when Paleolithic man was buried in the first dawn of time. Eloquent signs of his passing survive, as the visitor surely knows, or better yet, will soon discover here. And just a stone's throw from this Parador, the visitor can still follow one of the routes of the dinosaurs.

Some eight centuries before our own era, during the so-called Iron Age, numerous tribes roamed the area, tribes who knew how to find and exploit iron and other minerals. And with this prized and valuable metal they were able to cast the variety of tools necessary for their all too scant comfort and basic survival.

Many years would pass before the first Carthaginians would succeed in settling these fertile lowlands of Rioja. It is estimated that some two hundred years before Christ, the legendary Asdrubal would approach these settlements with an excessively greedy appetite. After a fierce siege and unusually stubborn resistance, he would conquer the territories. There are certain indications that the inhabitants were forced to feed themselves with the flesh of dead combatants during these bloody and prolonged battles.

Not much later, the Roman imperial legions sought a base, sustenance, leisure and business in these territories which offered such generous gifts of food, minerals and mild weather. However, they were already inhabited by Celtiberian peoples: tribes with customs and habits, cultures and remarkable civilizations.

They were governed by legal, ethic and esthetic codes. Although these were rudimentary, they provided firm guidelines for mutual coexistence.

They fed themselves on what nature itself provided – a great deal of game and abundant fishing– and on what they themselves learned to obtain – cultivating seeds and shepherding animals they had domesticated.

Almost two centuries before Christ, the Celtiberians fought against Rome. In the end, these peoples would be “Romanized”, and the *lex romana* imposed, but not without fierce and terrifying resistance. A century after the assassination of Sertorius in Huesca, the city was attacked by Afranius, legate of Pompey. In the siege of Calahorra, these proud Celtiberians were forced to survive on the bodies of warrior from both armies.

Around 70 BC, following Sertorius's assassination, Calahorra was stormed anew, and again the besieged had to eat human flesh. Once again the city was complete destroyed. Julius Caesar ordered the town to be rebuilt in gratitude for the support which the inhabitants had given to the Roman legions.

Just before the dawn of the Christian Era, Octavian (more commonly

known as Augustus) discharged his prestigious personal guard. This was made up of natives of the area, who obtained this valued privilege after having demonstrated eternal loyalty and heroism to the Roman invader. The emperor gave this city the privileged status of municipium: for all intents and purposes Calahorra came to belong and report to Rome. Augustus gave the city the right and privilege of minting Roman money.

The town would contain one of the most important Jewish quarters in Spain. It was unusual in that it had a wall all of its own. There was never any pillaging, murders, plundering or fires, and the Jews came to represent some 15-20 percent of the population.

In the 16th century, Franciscan friars came to settle in the castle here. As the original premises turned out to be too small, it was necessary to tear it down and build a new monastery. At the same time the synagogue was also torn down to satisfy the same need for expansion.

Moorish invaders would soon settle in the region, although they would only remain for two centuries, a short period in comparison with the overall duration of the Hispano-Arab stay on the peninsula. However, these would be intense and fruitful times. All of these regions were densely populated, in contrast with the deserted frontiers along the Duero. Inhabitants of one religion or another were able to live together without great difficulty. Such would be the case of Count Casio and his illustrious grandson, Muza Ben Muza, who would enjoy the honorific title of *“Third King of Spain”*. Son of the Visigothic Banu Casi family, and a convert to Islam, he established himself in the area ruling a virtually independent Muladi kingdom. He had such power that he would control one of the most important of the twenty-seven jurisdictions of the Moorish controlled areas of the peninsula.

Although the Moor did not stay long, the influence of this period was very intense, yielding irrigation and farming methods previous to the Romans and prior to that invented by the Egyptian pharaohs. These were perfected using hydraulic and mechanical devices, with amazing results. They introduced or spread the practice of crop rotation, periodically planting certain varieties, and then changing to other crops for the next sowing

season. This allowed cultivation to continue virtually uninterrupted. Semi-industrial silk production was also introduced. However, perhaps the most decisive development for these lands was the introduction of techniques for cultivating fruits and vegetables such as the artichoke, famous and prestigious in the present and future throughout La Rioja.

The cities, medinas, were also recovered and improvements made to the appearance of the villas abandoned after the splendor of the Roman period. While the noble Roman estates enjoyed slaves and comfortable, privileged thermæ, the Arab medina introduced all these and many more refined pleasures, hygiene and customs in the city itself. The thermæ became private baths, while also public.

Those faithful to the Koran would also organize all of the Moorish territory with no other restriction than the rights of others and a respect for their god. There were new and important nuances concerning matters of morality and public safety. The *almotazén* was a magistrate in charge of maintaining the cult, while also being the highest official for collections, including control over weights and measures in the markets and the quality of products, and even serving as a mediator in disputes between neighbors.

Official public education was very advanced. Higher studies were available in the humanities, sciences, medicine and law. Thus came to be such Iberian philosophers as Averroes and Tofail; chemists such as Abul-Rassen, who invented and spread the solvent today known as turpentine; Idrisi, world-famous geographer; and poets and musicians of universal renown.

At last there arrived El Cid. He fought against Martín González of Aragon in Calahorra, and it was inevitable that Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar would triumph, and Calahorra would become part of the Crown of Castile.

The vicissitudes of history led Calahorra to be part of Navarre until Alfonso VI and Sancho Ramírez divided up the kingdom between themselves, and at last, and since that time, Calahorra would be Castilian.



THE PARADOR MARCUS FABIO QUINTILIANO

The Parador enjoyed by today's visitor overlooks an open area, perhaps originally somewhat larger than its current size, which was at one time occupied by a Roman circus of enormous dimensions. It was almost as large as that of Rome and was the site of spectacles which were important throughout all of the empire's territory. This was the period in which Augustus bestowed the status of municipium on the city and allowed it to mint its own imperial coinage.

It was here that Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (known as Quintilian) was born in 42 AD. He began his education at the center which already

existed in the primitive town. He would end up an exceptional and world-famous orator. According to learned opinion, he was inferior to Cicero only in his Latin and eloquence, but in his laws and oratory he had no peer.

What is not so well known about the host of this Parador is that he was a teacher, and much less that he was the first teacher to receive a salary from the state for his work. This *“patron”* of teachers was a lawyer, private tutor for the Roman imperial family and a highly important writer. His most well-known work is the *Institutio oratorio*. The Parador which carries his name honors his memory with a portrait in oil which the visitor

will find in a special location.

At the end of the 3rd century two special saints would settle in the town: Saint Emeterius and Saint Celedonius, Roman legionaries who belonged to Legio VII Claudia Pia Fidelis, where they were aquilifers (special standard bearers), an honorific post of medium rank. During the "purge of Diocletian," the saints were condemned to the dungeons and their throats cut for their heterodox beliefs.

In this same century there was born in the city a citizen called Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, considered the greatest Latin Christian poet of all time. He came to be governor of Tarragona.

MIRACLES OF CALAHORRA

During the reconquest of Calahorra, in 1045, the city's inhabitants received invaluable and unexpected help: in the heat of battle there appeared Saint Millán de la Cogolla, Saint Emeterius and Saint Celedonius on the walls to show the Christians where they should attack. Such invaluable and miraculous help assured a Christian victory.

On another occasion, Saint Andrew, the Apostle, appeared in flesh and blood close to this Parador. He came to do justice and solve the dilemma of a peasant called Ortuño, a great believer. This man, after having been judged and condemned, was being lifted by the rope to be executed. Saint Andrew prevented his death at the very last minute.

A beautiful legend tells that King Ramiro, while besieging the town, set himself up with his host alongside its impregnable walls. When night came, he withdrew to sleep. Between sleeping and waking the apostle Saint James appeared to him and said: "... don't worry about this defeat, Ramiro. Tomorrow, return to battle with the same eagerness; I will be protecting you at the head of your army. You will recognize me because I will descend from the heavens astride a white horse ..."

Besides this beautiful legend, what is certain is that the so-called Vow of Santiago was established. As of then: "all Christian territories which are so for all time must pay and send tribute to the Holy See at Santiago de Compostela..."

Said vow was so fruitful for the see at Compostela that it lasted until the very eve of the War of Independence, shortly after the beginning of the 19th century.

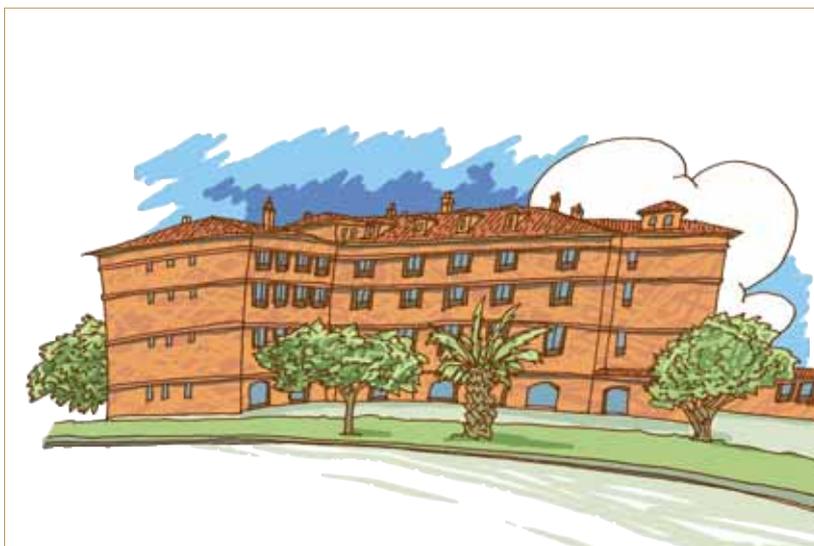
In the mid-16th century, the Inquisition occupied the most emblematic buildings of the city, exercising the strictest control. For dark reasons and the affairs involving interested parties, the Holy Tribunal of Calahorra was accused of excessive benevolence to dangerous infidels. Apparently, this reason was given as justification for moving the Holy Offices to Logroño. However, the accusation does not appear to have been accurate. According to learned opinion, it appears clear that in the

course of just one year, there were a great many executions of those "perverse witches." Written and signed confessions from the Holy Office have been preserved. These certify that the witches were forced to throw themselves off the highest of towers. Just before hitting the ground, they would be caught up by Lucifer himself, to be taken off to the eternal fires of Hell.

Those people suffered contradictory beliefs; not even ecclesiastical authorities agreed with one another. It even came to pass that Lope de Esparza himself –an irreproachable and admired local mayor– would be accused of serious anathema. The abbot of Isaba was forced to intervene in the face of said unjust accusations. From his pulpit he warned the faithful not to believe in either witches or warlocks, because there were none. He said that it was the devil who made some say that witches existed, and that they did not know what they were saying, nor should any credit be given to their words. But such sermons brought him into conflict with the inexorable official doctrine: witches existed, but if they showed themselves to be repentant, "they should be treated with love and allowed to return to the fold of the church" (although only after their assets had been expropriated and they had made the appropriate public penance). Such were the political and religious contradictions that the problem was dealt with in the legislative assembly, which proclaimed: "The churches have been and

continue to be very badly controlled and governed, and certain errors have been made, such as that concerning witches, among others ..."

Even so, this would not be enough to halt official doctrine. The accusations were so many, so venial and so absurd that in the proceedings of the time statements were read such as, "... the witch killed my son because she accused me of having been a bad intermediary in a market-place sale ..." or "... she killed my wife because the herd of pigs went into her garden and ate up all the apples..."



Calahorra also had a magnificent open-air theater. According to those in the know, it was almost a twin of Almagro's famous one. Unfortunately, it was demolished long ago.

In the 19th century, many things changed in Calahorra. A night school for adults was set up, perhaps one of the first in Spain. And the railroad arrived. For the first time in our country, the canned food industry began. The famous local pepper was the first product to be preserved in this way.

In 1879 the first permanent bullring was built, one of the first in the region. It was inaugurated with a spectacular bull fight, featuring no less than El Lagartijo. In 1943, the second permanent ring was built: the current one. The inaugural bill featured Manolete, Pepe Luis Vázquez and El Andaluz.

Distinguished bullfighters were also born on these banks of the Cidacos. Juan Apañan was the most famous of an extended bullfighting family, and captured for all eternity in an etching by the master, Goya. It should be known that this has been the birthplace of bullfighters and ranchers of great renown, such as the prestigious Díaz family.

THE FIRST HELICOPTER THAT LEARNED TO FLY

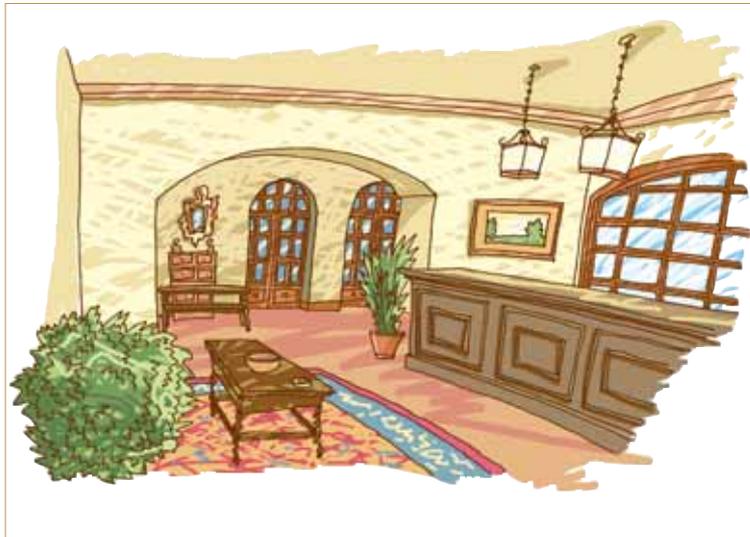
Another, no less important, event occurred here: the true inventor of the first Spanish helicopter was to be Julián Ruiz Felipe. There is evidence that the engineer was able to rise and fly above these valleys, until an unusually strong wind smashed the machine to bits on one of the tests. It is still told – and documented – that the ingenious craftsman received no answer to his repeated attempts to gain support for his work from municipal, provincial and national authorities, or the neighboring French.

In the municipal museum there is a model of the wonderful prototype, which was duly patented. It is speculated that De La Cierva himself may have plagiarized the invention modeled, or is that just slander?

THE HOUSE OF ROSA

In the twenties there occurred an event well deserving of a certain socio-cultural reflection. One fine day a self-assured and determined young woman, a stranger in town, arrived with the intention of setting up a house of ill repute. To make her business more efficient, this Rosa established such novel systems for the greater enjoyment of the amorous young men as periodically renewing the girls, thus removing the tedium of a monotonous selection. She also promoted weekly hygiene and medical check-ups.

She sat her male customers down and subjected them to scrupulous review and selection. Only those who were the best-endowed, had the best bearing and the most refined manners were admitted. Each customer paid one silver five-peseta coin for services rendered, not an insignificant amount for the time.



Another surprising novelty was that it was the prostitutes who chose the man most to their liking. Everything went according to plan for the self-assured Rosa. One fine day the neighbors suspected that, judging from his figure, a certain customer who had arrived covering himself up to his eyes might be the mayor himself. To clear up doubts, local youths lit a string of firecrackers outside the famous house. Hearing the noise, terrified prostitutes and customers alike came running out, stark naked. And it was recognized that it was in fact his worshipfulness, the mayor, who led the illustrious procession of visitors.

Do not forget that from the beginning of the reign of General Franco, all brothels were completely forbidden throughout Spain, all brothels that is, except “*The house of Rosa*,” who was able to continue offering her peculiar services for so long that there are still residents who remember and can tell of many more curious details of those surprising pursuits.

What is more, any visitor who would like further confirmation can go to the street dedicated to Rosa and ask the oldest inhabitants which Rosa is being referred to. We remind all those who lodge at the inviting Parador de Calahorra that you are sharing streets and rooms with any number of well-known, important and powerful personages from different periods: the Catholic Monarchs, El Cid, Felipe V, Joseph Bonaparte, Esparteros. They visited this city and lodged on these streets in which you are staying, mixing with its people and its landscapes and enjoying its excellent cuisine.

SANCTA SANCTORUM OF EXCELLENT VICTUALS

It has always been known by all: Rioja is full of irrefutable arts and handicrafts relating to the most exquisite, holy and wise gluttony. Its residents are generous, and no less noble is the produce of the land itself, its wines, or the carefully prepared cooking.

Perhaps the large region of Calahorra is not as well known, but the table and stove frequently offer a welcome surprise for the visitor. Even if you are not a regular visitor, you will soon discover that these fertile plains produce such abundant and surprising vegetables that they could never be absent from any table at any time of year. While that is saying something, it is not all: there is no lack of fish, of which cod is king, or fish casseroles.

And there are birds, such as partridge, and lamb, which has known no other food than its mother's milk. All of this and more can be found at table in the Parador, for your assured and unequivocal delight, where products are carefully selected and laboriously and surprisingly prepared.

Whatever time of year you arrive, certain dishes will always be available, dishes such as **Potatoes with Cod and Piquillo Peppers; Asparagus or Lettuce Hearts Served in a Variety of Ways; Mixed Vegetable Sautés of all Types**, depending on the season and the diner's tastes, sautés of fresh vegetables picked locally.

There is also **Cod Rioja Style**; and meats, including **Lamb Chops, Sirloin Steak**, and even **Deer Loins Roasted** with the help of one of the ancient Rioja wines.

For learned palates, this Parador offers seasonal surprises. Any spring between April and May you can count on dishes containing asparagus, fresh broad beans, peas and fresh young garlic. The Arabs brought the artichoke, and its hearts – the hearts of not just any artichoke – are uniquely prepared at the hotel. In the spring it is also customary to offer dishes featuring exquisite snails harvested by the hotel.

In summer there is also great variety: green peppers (of the cristal variety), and the classic red ones.

During the spectacular autumn and winter weather these kitchens are more than well stocked with cauliflower, called pellas in these parts, borage and thistles, as well as sweet blood puddings with pine nuts.

There is nothing which can compare with **Roast Cameros Kid**. Or, if you prefer, we offer a surprising dish known as **Patorillas**, a mysterious mixture of lamb's trotters and tripe from the same animal in a mysterious stew. In addition to the autumn milk caps and boletus, numerous other varieties of mushrooms are gathered in the area.

There still remain not a few desserts, as delicious as they are relatively unknown. We have **Calagurris**, a tasty almond and coconut cookie; **Fardalejo**, another cookie with similar yet different ingredients; and **Rusos** from Alfaro, made from a secret recipe which no one will divulge.

REMOTE TIMES, AT LEAST NEOLITHIC

The region's geography consists of beautiful valleys and no less lovely mountains, both threaded through with their own particular cultures, arts, myths and rites that came to thrive through the continual roaming of numerous and diverse peoples.

It is pleasant, yet not so surprising, to come across frequent and extremely valuable remains from Paleolithic times, some enshrined in

This is not to mention the exceptional **Cameros Goat's Milk Cheese**, which is produced in limited quantities, but is of high quality and has a great deal of demand. To this we must still add **Goat's Milk Curd Pudding**, made at the Parador following (now, as in the past) one of the following secret recipes.

THE SECRET RECIPES

CURD PUDDING A LA PIEDRA

–After boiling the goat's milk, add an incandescent stone to flavor it. Let it cool to 36-42 degrees, then add rennet.

ALWAYS TENDER AND JUICY ARTICHOKE

–Always boil them in cold water, with a splash of oil and a pinch of salt. No lemons or flour! Sauté the artichokes with a bit of the cooking broth, garlic, just a bit of flour and cured ham.

BORAGE

–As it comes: just remove the leaves and chop up the stalks. Never peel them. If they are ripe, it is obvious. Boil them in a tall narrow pot in abundant boiling water with salt. Boil in water on high heat. Then cool them, rinse with cold water and season to taste.

FRITADA

–This is a sauté with just peppers, tomato and garlic, never zucchini or eggplant.

SNAILS FROM THE BANKS OF THE CIDACOS

–After draining and rinsing them, the snails collected along these banks "*must be hanged.*" Put them in a covered pot with a little water on medium heat. "*When they are all out of their shells*", turn up the heat. Wash the snails again and immerse them in abundant cold water, with bay leaf, onion, dried peppers and a ham bone. Cook them.

Fry up some garlic, onion, cubes of cured ham, tomato, chilies, and meat with dried peppers. Add the snails, already cooked, and some of the cooking broth



museums and others scattered by nature itself. There is also evidence of abundant Neolithic settlements. Together these provide an accurate image of those periods.

From central Europe peoples known as Beroni and Pelendoni arrived, becoming the first residents of the Rioja. Of somewhat Celtiberian origins, they lived communally following common racial origins and tribal affinity.

This was thus the beginnings of a certain regional unity.

Due to its location, this Parador can serve as a setting-off point for a wide variety of excursions or walks, according to the interests and appetites of each visitor.

■ In Pursuit of the Mythic Dinosaurs

Following the “*Tracks of the Dinosaurs*” route is both wind-swept and interesting. This part of Rioja allows us to travel to the most remote past in search of those enormous animals. Many dinosaurs lived right here in Rioja. Fossilized dinosaur prints are called “*icnitas*”, and experts swear that these could even be the best specimens in the world.

Some 120 million years ago the climate in this region was damp and relatively mild, excellent for these enormous animals. They occupied large areas around the basins of the Cidacos, Linares, Alhama and Leza Rivers.

From the Parador the visitor can choose from amongst several nearby sites, all of them very interesting.

The site at **Valdecevilla** has extremely well-preserved tracks. In **Los Cayos** the visitor will find three dozen prints of large carnivores. In **Igeo** there is a petrified conifer dating from 120 million years ago. Scientific curiosity is growing daily, above all regarding the tracks. Specialists can even describe, with a certain degree of preciseness, their physical appearance, diet and skills.

The *Iguanodon* was one of the most abundant species in these parts, weighing somewhere around five tons. For educational museum enthusiasts, in the village of **Enciso** there is a Paleontology Center where explanatory panels give precise information about anything the visitor might like to know.

Plant lovers can enjoy forests, large wooded areas, and a visit to **Villarroya Oak Forest**, near the Yerga Mountains. Here there are examples of one-hundred-year-old kermes oaks. You will also come across yew trees and even not-so-fierce wild boar.

■ Hiking

The **Green Way of Cidacos** offers the opportunity to hike 34 kilometers along the former railroad line from Calahorra to Arnedillo.

■ Of Arts, Handicrafts and History

May we also suggest another unique handful of alternatives to enjoy these small, but jam-packed, lands? They are filled with arts, handicrafts,

legends, traditions, customs and even cuisines, the nuances of which merit exploration and re-exploration.

■ Logroño: Recovering Ancient Splendors

It is true that Logroño is not what it once was ... yet. However, it is making every effort to bring itself up-to-date without giving up any of its traditional values and customs. The greater part of its monumental – especially religious – attractions still remain, born and embraced by the Way of Saint James, and always united with the Ebro, the Great River.

There are still unique monumental remains of what the visitor will identify as “*The Logroño of the Towers*”. These are the four unique temples:

–**The Imperial Church of Santa María del Palacio**. Romanesque stonework from the 12th century. Today it is still one of the most-valued and beautiful examples of Spanish Gothic.

–**San Bartolomé**. Came into being between the 13th and 14th centuries. Excellent Mudejar tower.

–**Santiago el Real**. Enjoys miraculous prebends from Santiago. Ordered built by King Ramiro I, perhaps as a result of the miraculous Battle of Clavijo.

–**Santa María de la Redonda**. One of the three cathedrals in all of La Rioja. Daughter of a Romanesque polygonal temple.

■ The Castilians of Berceo

Neither residents nor visitors should lose the memory, however remote it may be, of the origins of the Castilian language – today Spanish. It came to life here, and established itself and spread throughout the Riojas. More than a thousand years ago **San Millán de la Cogolla** was the crucible of all languages and dialects derived from those times.

Try as they may, visitors will not be able to miss other singular sites, all rewarding visits.

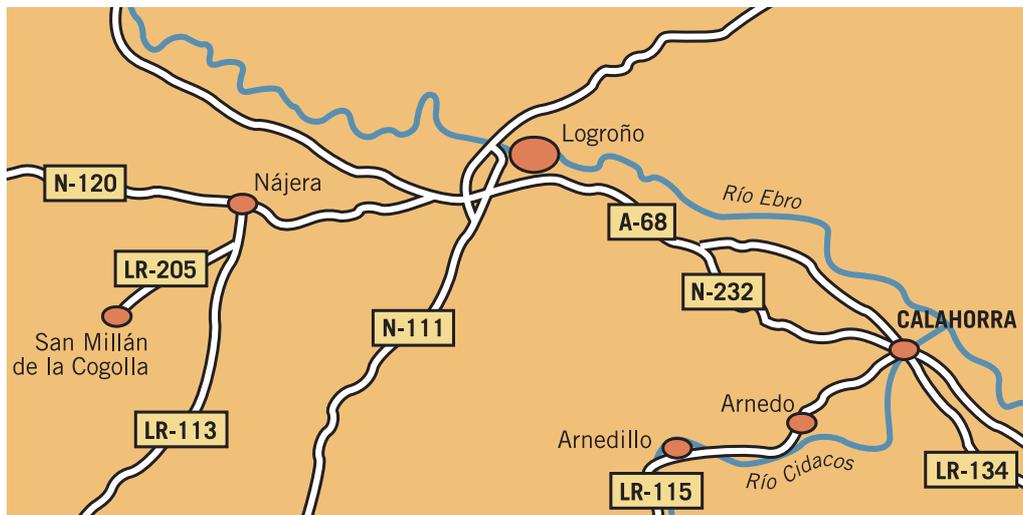
Nájera entered history as the ancient court of the kings of Navarre. In this already modern and expanding town it would be a good idea to visit, at least, the **Monastery of Santa María la Real**. With Romanesque origins, it also has a later Gothic style. The temple still contains the so-called Pantheon of the Kings, with close to thirty tombs of notable monarchs, princes and princesses, and infantes and infantas from Castile and Navarre.

And so, without trying, you will find yourself a traveler, or at least a pilgrim, because you are already in the heart of the Way of Saint James,



the Pilgrimage Route to Santiago de Compostela. From this point, the route continues through **Alesanco**, an outstanding 18th-century temple, and some forty kilometers beyond, through **Berceo**.

But the traveler should beware, for these routes are only clumsy threads of more and more to see and unravel, so much for the eyes to enjoy. For Calahorra and its surrounding Riojas always demand more time from the traveler on each visit.



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