



# CASTROJERIZ-FRÓMISTA

When lakes covered the countryside



NATURE  
ON THE WAY  
OF ST JAMES





*Published by:* Caja de Burgos  
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*Text:* Aula de Medio Ambiente Caja de Burgos  
Miguel A. Pinto Cebrián y Juan Carlos Utiel Alfaro

*Photography:* Aula de Medio Ambiente Caja de Burgos  
Miguel A. Pinto Cebrián y Juan Carlos Utiel Alfaro

Nacho Contreras Fernández  
Javier María García López  
Jorge Martín Muñoz

*Illustrations:* Aula de Medio Ambiente Caja de Burgos  
Miguel A. Pinto Cebrián

*Maps:* Rico Adrados

*Translation:* Andrew Holland

*English version review:* Carlos García Güemes

*Design and printing:* Imprenta Lomas

# CASTROJERIZ-FRÓMISTA

## When lakes covered the countryside

On this leg, of about 25 kilometers, the main features are those related to the Duero river basin and the changes in landscape; leaving behind the last calcareous moors of Burgos and entering the wide landscapes of the northern Meseta.

The rural mosaic of the stage is enriched by the Duero river meadows and the spreading valleys of the rivers Odra and Pisuerga, and the home straight of the Castile Canal just before finishing in Frómista.

Moors, hill slopes, extensive wheat fields, rivers and riverside copses; this is the scenery in which you will find a wide variety of wildlife which will accompany you along the Way.

*This series of pocket guides: **Nature on the Way of St James**, is fruit of the collaboration agreement between the Social Work Programme of Caja de Burgos and the Natural Heritage Foundation of Castilla y Leon.*

*The object of these pamphlets is to give pilgrims, hikers and inhabitants of the Jacobean area some interesting notes on the nature and landscape of the Way.*

*The stages described are part of the the French Way as it passes through Burgos: Santo Domingo de la Calzada-Belorado; Belorado-San Juan de Ortega; San Juan de Ortega-Burgos; Burgos-Castrojeriz and Castrojeriz-Frómista, covering the approximate 132 km of the Way in Burgos.*

*We hope that the reader will be able to appreciate and, above all, respect what Nature has to offer and thanks to these simple notes will enjoy and understand the Way a little better.*



## STAGE 1: CASTROJERIZ-MOSTELARES

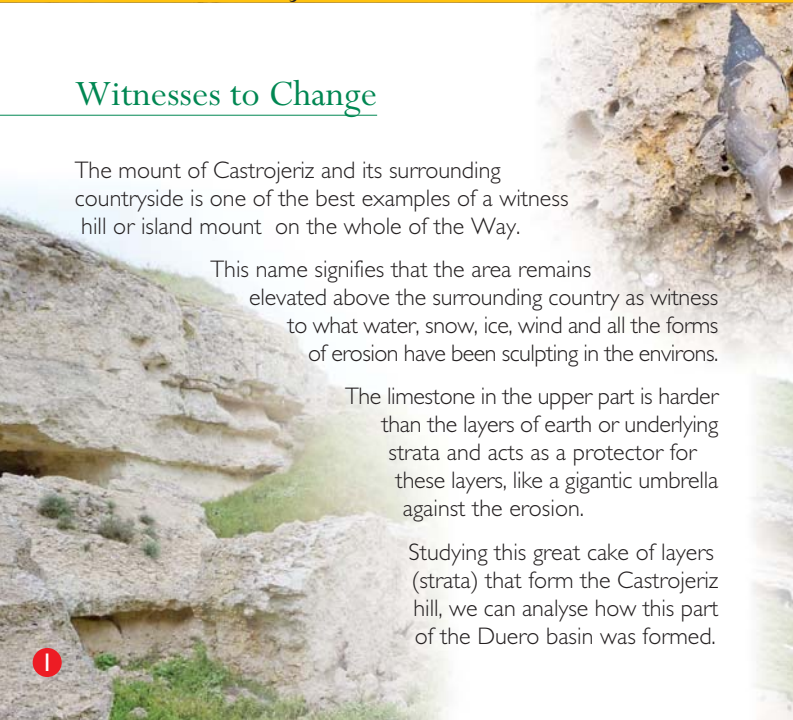
### Witnesses to Change

The mount of Castrojeriz and its surrounding countryside is one of the best examples of a witness hill or island mount on the whole of the Way.

This name signifies that the area remains elevated above the surrounding country as witness to what water, snow, ice, wind and all the forms of erosion have been sculpting in the environs.

The limestone in the upper part is harder than the layers of earth or underlying strata and acts as a protector for these layers, like a gigantic umbrella against the erosion.

Studying this great cake of layers (strata) that form the Castrojeriz hill, we can analyse how this part of the Duero basin was formed.





*The moor limestones  
contain winkle fossils*

Both on the top of Casrtojeriz hill – where an excellent view can be enjoyed – and further on in Mostelares, fossil remains of small snails can be found encrusted in the rocks.

These molluscs lived in areas of fresh water which indicates that the rocks formed in great ponds and lakes in the interior of the Peninsula millions of years ago.

*The study of these remains gives us  
information about what happened  
millions of years ago.*







## Giant Reeds and Eaglets

Marsh Harrier

### Curiosities in the Reed Beds

An optimistic “chep-chep, cherk-cherk, tuichirrek, tui-chirrek, uiit-uiit, cherp-cherp, chirrek-chirrek” or even a “karra-karra-karrakik”, followed by a “kerk-jerk-jerk” describe the song of the Great and Common Reed Warblers. In spring and summer both birds can be found along the Odra and we can hear the explosive song as it rises from the thickest reed beds.



Reed warbler



The Marsh Harrier is present all-year-round. This bird of prey is rare in the province of Burgos, the rivers Odra and Brullés supporting the greatest number of breeding pairs.

The conservation of the reed beds is fundamental if these magnificent birds are to continue breeding there.

Reed Warbler





*Bullrush or Reedmace*



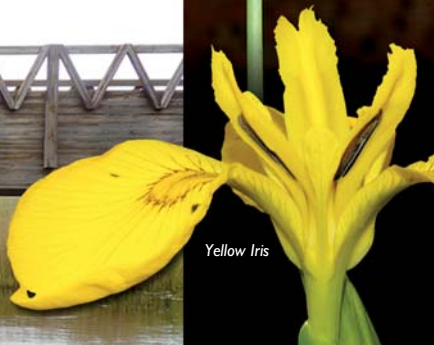
*Common Reed*

## Not all are Reeds or Rushes

Reeds, Bullrushes, Branched Bur Reeds and Yellow Iris are frequent in the Duero basin. Less common is the Flowering Rush with its bright pink flowers.



*Bulrush*



*Yellow Iris*




## The Climb to Mostelares recounts the History of the Duero

The silts and red clays that you can see on the lower part of the climb, on both sides of the Way, just after crossing the Odra, were deposited by rivers which fed into great plains without exit to the sea, a little less than 20 million years ago.

Imagine a network of rivers and canals intersecting each other and forming an extensive mosaic of inland lakes, depositing the sediments that they have brought from the mountains which surround this basin.

This is the process which formed the *Tierras de Campos* (Agricultural Lands) which will accompany you for many kilometres after leaving behind the limestone moors.



The moor limestone protects the lower strata





*Moor limestone*

As the lakes became deeper, and with the variations in climate, marl (a mixture of limestone and clay) and limestone were deposited. In epochs of extreme aridity and drought gypsum was formed which crystallised as the water of the lakes evaporated.

This sequence can be appreciated as you climb up to Mostelares. Firstly silts and red clays, then limestone in three narrow bands which protect the marls and gypsums until arriving at the top, formed by moor limestone.

*Gypsum appears on the slope in very thin strips.*



*No more than 15 million years ago the Duero basin opened to the sea at Oporto, eroding in that space of time everything you see, except the moors and the witness mounts*



*Mostelares (left), the moors (centre) and the witness mount of Castrojeriz (right) have resisted the erosion. If you notice, all of them rise to the same height, this being the level reached by the sediments on the lake beds millions of years ago.*

*The erosion of the river Odra and other erosive agents have carried off what is missing, forming the valley.*

*Lataste's Viper*



*Millipede*



## A lively climb, full of life

White on top and red at the bottom. That's the climb to Mostelares and according to the colours there are some plants or others. In the raw reds live the flowering Milk Vetch or Carbona, which shows us that there are Rabbits around here. And these in their turn are prey to the Booted Eagle which share the slopes with Bee-eaters during the spring and summer.

The white parts, rich in marl and gypsums, sustain a vegetation known as gipsofila (lover of gypsum), which is able to live in very poor soils. This vegetation is formed by some sages that only live in Spain or thick leaved plants like the Bushy Restharrow, which in this way manage to survive in such a dry environment.



*Aguila Calzada*

*Wild Rabbit*



*White Rockrose*



*Fox Tail Milk Vetch*





Bee-eater

The herbs Shrubby Gromwell, Lavender Cotton, Small Yellow Vetch and White Rockrose dye the bleached background with colour at the end of Spring. Through them move Millipedes on cool days and Lataste's Vipers on hot days.

On the slopes there is a place for heroes, in this case the lichens. Like a crust over the surface of the rocks they have the ability to conserve water and start to form a base upon which the larger plants can colonize the dry marl and gypsum slopes.



Small Yellow Vetch



Bushy Restharrow



Lavender Cotton



Spicy Sage



The True Service or Cheque Tree is an example of the ancient cultivations that covered these slopes a very long time ago. This fruit tree, typical of dry areas, is disappearing from the countryside as it ceases to be worked. The hill of Mostelares was cultivated, for this reason there are marked terraces with small stone walls.



Lichen





## STAGE 2: FROM MOOR TO FUENTE DEL PIOJO (LOUSE



Biting  
Stonecrop



Sticky  
Andryala





## SPRING) AND ITERO DE LA VEGA



### When the landscape opens

The descent from the moors gives way to new horizons in which the agricultural lands dominate.

Fuente del Piojo is one of the few fresh water springs on this leg and it owes its name to the fact that pilgrims were deloused here! If you look at the ground and slope just behind the spring you will notice that it is different from those around, being formed by rounded stones forming a conglomerate. These are much more recent, from the Quaternary, with less than 1.5 million years.

Further on, before Boadilla del Camino, we will again come across these conglomerates.

In the *campos de piedra* (stone fields) we will find the Sticky Andryala and the Biting Stonecrop. Also you will see Sainfoin, which is a fodder crop becoming more and more scarce.



The conglomerates behind the spring are from the Quaternary.

Sainfoin

## Crossing the Pisuerga we say goodbye to Burgos Province

From the Copper Cave in Palencia to its mouth in Pesqueruela, Valladolid, the Pisuerga River runs for 283 kilometers. It comes down from the Palentine mountains in a southerly direction crossing the Alto Campoo and demarcates the Tierra de Campos in the west. Halfway along this course it marks the frontier between the provinces of Palencia and Burgos.

It crosses the city of Valladolid and after Simancas its waters flow toward the Atlantic now united with those of the *Castilla y León* river par excellence, the Duero.



Otter



Golden Oriole



Penduline Tit





Otter  
droppings



Hops

## River scenes

The exuberance of the riverside thickets contrasts with the ordered files of planted poplars which produce wood in a short time. In summer it is easy to hear the Golden Oriole while in winter we can see the nests of the Penduline Tit in the tree branches.

Hops grows over the Willows along the river; the home of numerous animals including the Otter. The Barbel is the biggest fish in this part of the river and the North American Signal Crayfish have substituted the White Clawed Crayfish, celebrated in a gastronomic summer festival up river in Herrera de Pisuegra since 1972.



Barbel



North American  
Signal Crayfish



### STAGE 3: ITERO DE LA VEGA-BOADILLA DEL CAMINO POR



*After some hard work the adobe ricks  
are left to dry in the sun*



*On the right of the way, before climbing  
to Oteros, in the very last of the moorland  
scenery you will again find rounded  
stones very similar to those of Louse  
spring. They belong to the same period.*



LOS OTEROS

## The landscapes of the Northern Meseta

Feral Pigeons



The neverending fields with gentle slopes covered in cereals form the landscape which accompanies us for many a kilometre, only broken by the water courses. *Ancha es Castilla...* (Wide is Castille...)

The dovecotes are traditional in these lands. Made of adobe, a mixture of mud and straw, they reflect the materials available in the zone to build houses and all types of construction. Nowadays the pigeons are not eaten and the majority of the dovecotes are abandoned. Nevertheless, many have been restored to preserve this cultural heritage.

The Feral Pigeon is the favourite prey of the Peregrine, which finds these plains a magnificent terrain for hunting.

Peregrine



Yellow  
cress



Blue  
Cornflower



Common  
Poppy



Violet Horned Poppy



Sicklefruit  
Hypocym



Ramping-  
fumitory



Skylark

## Life among the crops

In the farming areas of the Way we are accompanied by many different types of birds. One of the most frequent is the Skylark which is characterised by a small crest and white outer feathers in the tail. It sings while flying high in the air, livening up the Way in springtime. In autumn and winter they form large flocks which rove the fields looking for food.

Remember that this bird is a relative of the Calandra Lark, Crested Lark and Woodlark which have been presented in previous stages.





Orange Tip



Corncockle

## The flowers of the wheatfields

Associated with cereal cultivation are plants like Yellow Cress, Common Poppys, Blue Cornflowers, Sicklefruit Hypocoum, Ramping-fumitories and Violet Horned Poppys. From the end of April to mid June they can be found giving colour around the fields.

Some species are becoming scarce due to the chemical war waged against them. For example the Corncockle was once very common and is now difficult to see.

A butterfly easy to spot is the Orange Tip, whose caterpillars feed on Yellow Cress and other crucifers.





## STAGE 4: BOADILLA DEL CAMINO - FRÓMISTA







Purple Heron



Greylag Goose



## Ships in the Fields?

The Castille Canal is one of the most interesting engineering works of the 19th Century. It was a breakthrough which established a before and after in its zone of influence until the advent of the railway.

The Way shares a common space with the *camino de sirga* (cable way) by which the animals that pulled the barges circulated.

At the edges of the canal there are a series of lagoons important in the breeding of waterfowl, like the Ontanilla pond, which has been integrated in Nature 2000 Network. In autumn it is possible to see flocks of Greylag Geese approaching the La Nava Lagoon and in summer perhaps a Purple Heron, a bird which breeds in only a few places in Castilla y León.



## Frómista and its Cornice Decorations

At the end of this leg searching along the cornice of St Martin's church you will find the figure of nocturnal bird of prey. The Little Owl or Barn Owl was a companion of Atenea. In the following stage both species live in abandoned dovecotes. Furthermore, in the neverending fields of cereal that lead us to Camión, it may be possible to see a Great Bustard cross our path.

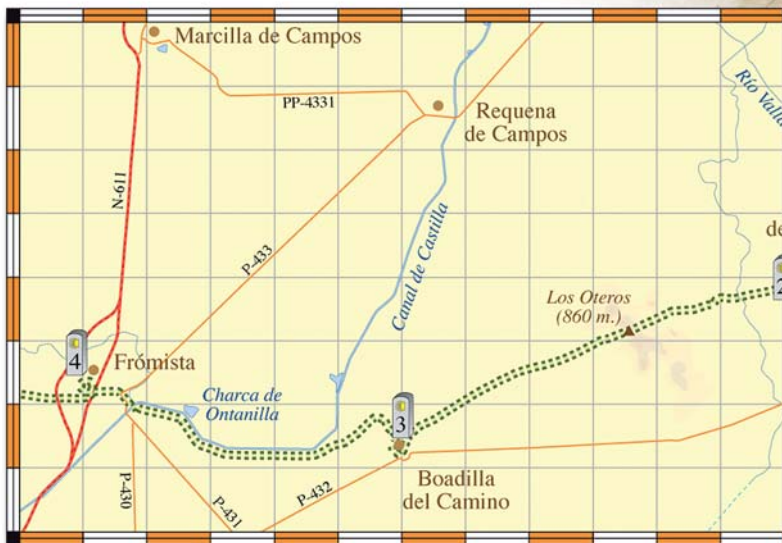
Curiously, in Frómista the Dominican friar Pedro González Telmo was born, better known as St Telmo, patron of navigators and of this village, although few seas can be found near here.

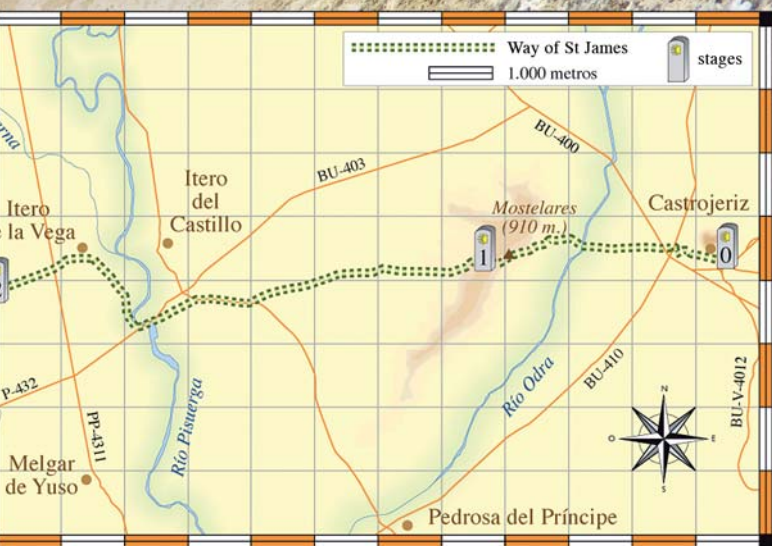
If you observe the base of the church closely, around eye level you will find similar fossils to those encountered at the beginning of this stage.

This indicates that these stones come from moorland limestone, very similar to those we now know from the moors of Burgos.

On your journey to Santiago you can count on the continued company of the wildlife that has evolved in the countryside as a result of the works of Nature and Man.

### Good Journey!







For more information:



**BURGOS - VALLADOLID - PALENCIA**

<http://www.medioambientecajadeburgos.com>  
[caminosantiago@medioambientecajadeburgos.com](mailto:caminosantiago@medioambientecajadeburgos.com)

