

Santander

Cantabria · Spain

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Santander is a port city on the north coast of Spain, in Cantabria. It has long city beaches, a grand seafront and a peninsula with a royal palace.

The weather is mild and often cloudy, which makes it a cool escape in summer. Santander suits a beach and seafood trip, and it is a good base for the green coast and mountains of Cantabria.

When to visit

Summer is the best season, with mild days and the best chance of sun. Spring and autumn are green but rainy. Winter is cool and wet.

The biggest event is the Semana Grande in late July, with concerts and street events around the city.

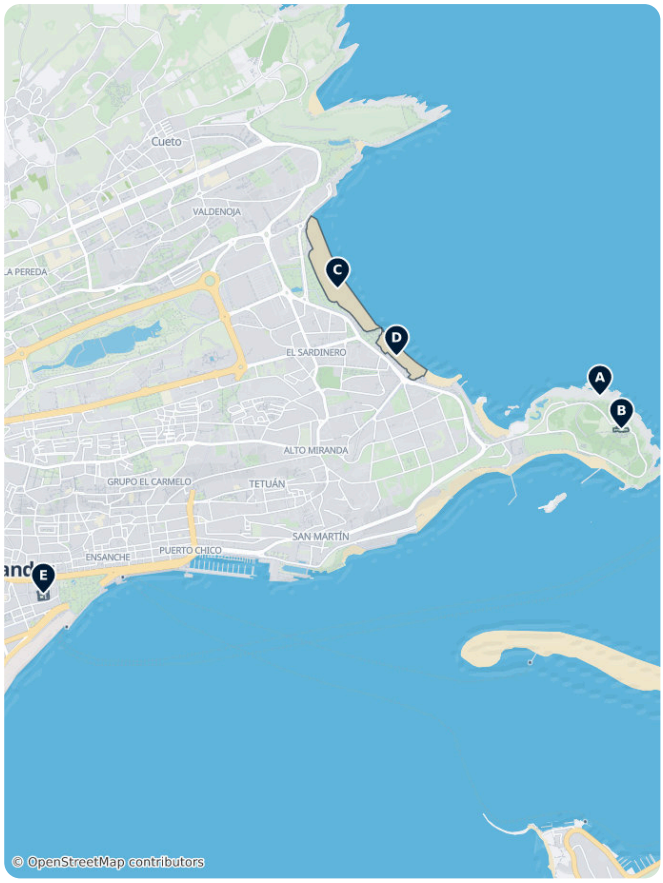
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	12° / 18°	6° / 2°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 20°	6° / 2°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 22°	7° / 3°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 24°	9° / 5°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 26°	11° / 8°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 29°	15° / 11°	13 rainy days · Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 29°	16° / 13°	12 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
August	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 30°	17° / 14°	12 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	15° / 12°	12 rainy days · Calm winds
October	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 27°	13° / 9°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 22°	9° / 5°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for sightseeing	13° / 19°	7° / 2°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: June, July, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Peninsula de la Magdalena is a green headland between two beaches, with walking paths and sea views.
- B Palacio de la Magdalena was built as a summer home for the Spanish royal family in the early 20th century. It stands at the end of the peninsula.
- C Segunda Playa de El Sardinero and D Primera Playa de El Sardinero are the main city beaches at El Sardinero, with a long promenade.
- E Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción is the city's cathedral. It was rebuilt in part after the great fire of 1941.
- The Centro Botín is an arts center on the waterfront, designed by Renzo Piano and opened in 2017.
- The Mercado de la Esperanza is a covered market near the center, good for local food.



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What to experience

- Walk the Sardinero promenade from the first beach to the second one at the end of the day. The light on the water is best before sunset.
- Take a boat across the bay to the small towns on the other side. Short ferry trips run in summer.

Day trips

- **Cabárceno Nature Park** (about 17 km, 20 minutes by car): a large park where animals live in a former mine landscape.
- Ⓐ Santillana del Mar (about 30 km, 35 minutes by car): a well-preserved medieval village, near the Altamira museum.
- Ⓑ Comillas (about 50 km, 50 minutes by car): a coastal town with Modernist buildings, including a villa by Gaudí.
- **Picos de Europa** (about 1.5 to 2 hours by car): a high mountain range with hiking trails.



Where to explore

Other places in Cantabria:

- Santillana del Mar for medieval streets.
- Comillas for the coast and Modernist buildings.

Getting there

- **By air**: Santander airport (SDR) is about 6 km from the center and has flights from Spain and some European cities. Bilbao airport (BIO) is about 1.5 hours away by road.
- **By train**: Trains from Madrid are slow. Check Renfe for times.
- **By bus**: Coaches from Madrid take about 5 hours, and there are links along the coast.
- **By ferry**: Ferries sail from Santander to the UK.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The center and the port are compact. The beaches at El Sardinero are about 3 km away, along a flat seafront.
- **City bus**: Local buses link the center with El Sardinero and the Magdalena peninsula.
- **Cycling**: The seafront paths are good for cycling.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The center is compact, and the beaches are about 3 km away along a flat seafront.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The seafront paths are good for cycling.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for the city. A car helps for day trips to Cantabria's villages.
- **Parking**: Use an underground car park in the center. Street parking is paid.
- **Restrictions**: Few. Some streets in the center are pedestrian only.

Food & drink

Santander is known for seafood. *Rabas* are fried squid rings, a Cantabrian classic. Anchovies from nearby Santoña are famous. For dessert, try *sobaos*, soft butter sponge cakes from the Pas valley.

Eat in the streets around the Mercado de la Esperanza and the port. Fish restaurants are also found along the waterfront.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Churros · Churros con Chocolate
Fried dough sticks served with a thick, dark hot chocolate for dipping — a classic Spanish breakfast or late-night snack.

LUNCH

Paella Valenciana
A saffron-scented rice dish cooked in a wide, shallow pan. The traditional Valencian version uses chicken, rabbit, and green beans — best eaten at midday.

Gazpacho
A cold, blended soup of raw tomatoes, cucumber, pepper, garlic, olive oil, and vinegar, originally from Andalusia. Served as a drink or a starter, especially in summer.

DINNER

Pulpo a la Gallega
Boiled octopus sliced onto a wooden board and dressed with olive oil, coarse salt, and smoked paprika — a signature dish of Galicia.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Jamón Ibérico
Dry-cured ham from acorn-fed Iberian pigs, sliced paper-thin and eaten on its own or with bread. The finest grade, jamón ibérico de bellota, is one of Spain's most prized products.

Tortilla Española
A thick potato and egg omelette, served warm or at room temperature, found in virtually every bar in Spain. Often eaten as a tapa or a quick meal.

Patatas Bravas
Fried potato chunks served with a spicy tomato sauce or aioli — one of the most common tapas across the country.

Pintxos
Small snacks anchored to slices of bread with a toothpick, the Basque Country's answer to tapas. Found in bar counters across San Sebastián and Bilbao, often with elaborate toppings.

Croquetas
Crispy breaded cylinders with a creamy béchamel filling, typically made with jamón, bacalà (salt cod), or mushrooms.

DRINKS

Rioja Wine · Vino de Rioja

Spain's best-known wine region produces full-bodied reds from Tempranillo grapes, aged in oak. The crianza, reserva, and gran reserva labels indicate increasing age and complexity.

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Safety & health

Santander is a safe city. Swim only on beaches with lifeguards, and watch the flags, because the Atlantic sea can be rough. Bring a rain jacket in any season.

History

Santander has been a port for centuries. In February 1941 a huge fire destroyed much of the old center, so most of the center today was rebuilt after that date. Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción was damaged but still stands.

The seaside district of El Sardinero grew in the 19th century, when the Spanish court and wealthy families came to the coast for the summer. Palacio de la Magdalena dates from that tradition.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Spain at a glance:

CURRENCY

EUR €

EMERGENCY

112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

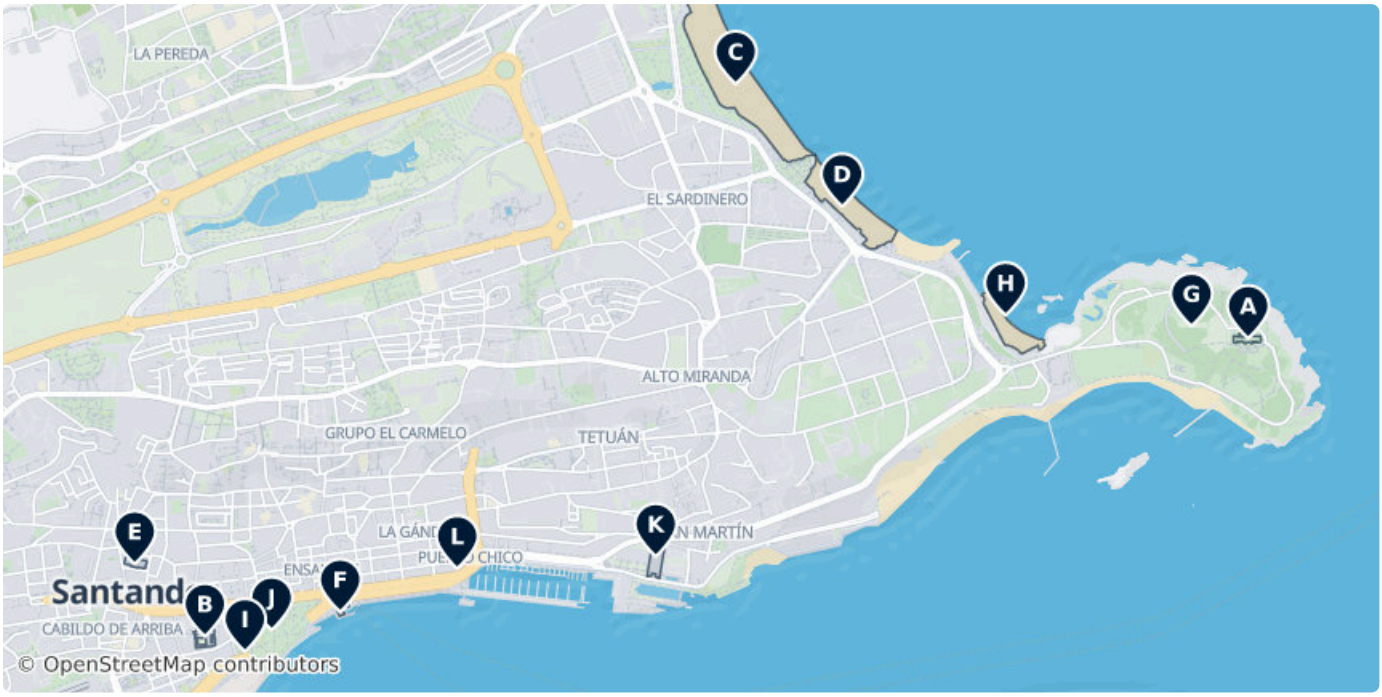
Spanish

TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Santander's Unmissable Treasures

Santander’s landscape is defined by the early 20th-century Palacio de la Magdalena, the former summer residence of Spanish royalty, and the expansive Magdalena Peninsula. The city center features the Gothic Santander Cathedral and the modernist Mercado de la Esperanza, while the waterfront is home to the historic Palacete del Embarcadero and Jardines de Pereda. Along the coast, the golden sands of El Sardinero and the distinctive rock formations of El Camello Beach offer natural beauty alongside cultural venues like the Palacio de Festivales.





A Palacio de la Magdalena

The Palacio de la Magdalena is a palace in Santander, Spain. Its construction was financed by popular subscription and given to the Spanish...

8 Calle de la Familia Real, Santander 39005, Spain (43.46917, -3.76626)

palaciomagdalena.com, +34 942 29 88 00



B Santander Cathedral

Santander Cathedral is located in the Spanish city of Santander. Its structure is mainly Gothic, although it has been extended and renovated...

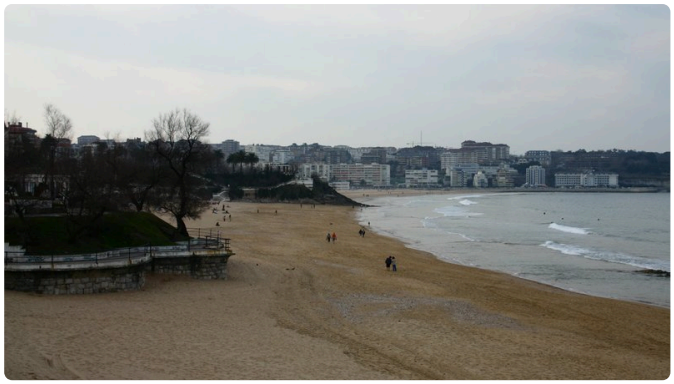
2 Plaza del Obispo José Eguino y Trecu, Santander 39002, Spain (43.46068, -3.80725)



C Sardinero Beach

Sardinero is a popular beach located in the Spanish city of Santander, Cantabria.

Santander 39005, Spain (43.47642, -3.78639)



D Primera Playa de El Sardinero

Sardinero is a popular beach located in the Spanish city of Santander, Cantabria.

Santander 39005, Spain (43.47293, -3.78221)



E Mercado de La Esperanza

A modernist market building inaugurated in 1904. It is one of the largest food markets in Cantabria, specializing in fresh local seafood, cheeses, and regional produce.

Plaza de la Esperanza 12, 39002 Santander (43.46274, -3.81000)

Mo–We	08:00–14:00
Th–Fr	17:00–19:30
Sa	08:00–14:00



F Palacete del Embarcadero

A former passenger terminal built in 1920, now functioning as an exhibition space and art gallery. It offers views across the Bay of Santander and hosts rotating cultural displays.

Muelle de Calderón, 39004 Santander (43.46137, -3.80193)

puertosantander.es/es/palacete-del-em... , +34 942 20 36 27



G Magdalena Peninsula

The Magdalena Peninsula is a 69-acre peninsula located near the entrance to the Bay of Santander in the city of Santander, Cantabria, along...

39005, Spain (43.46952, -3.76848)



H El Camello Beach

Named for a prominent rock formation that resembles a sitting camel, visible during low tide. It is a sandy beach located between the Magdalena Peninsula and the Sardinero coast.

(Unnamed Road), 39005, Spain (43.46983, -3.77579)



I Monumento al incendio de Santander

A bronze sculpture commemorating the Great Fire of 1941, which destroyed much of the city's historic center. The monument depicts figures fleeing the flames and the subsequent reconstruction.

6 Calle de Alfonso XIII, Santander 39002, Spain (43.46024, -3.80568)



J Jardines de José María Pereda

An urban park featuring diverse tree species, a large fountain, and sculptures. It connects the city center to the waterfront and sits adjacent to the contemporary Centro Botín.

(Unnamed Road), 39004, Spain (43.46086, -3.80463)



K Palacio de Festivales de Cantabria

Designed by architect Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza, this monumental theater hosts the Santander International Festival. Its distinctive marble and copper exterior overlooks the bay.

Calle de Germán Gamazo 3, 39004 (43.46295, -3.78953)

palaciofestivales.com

L Casa Lita

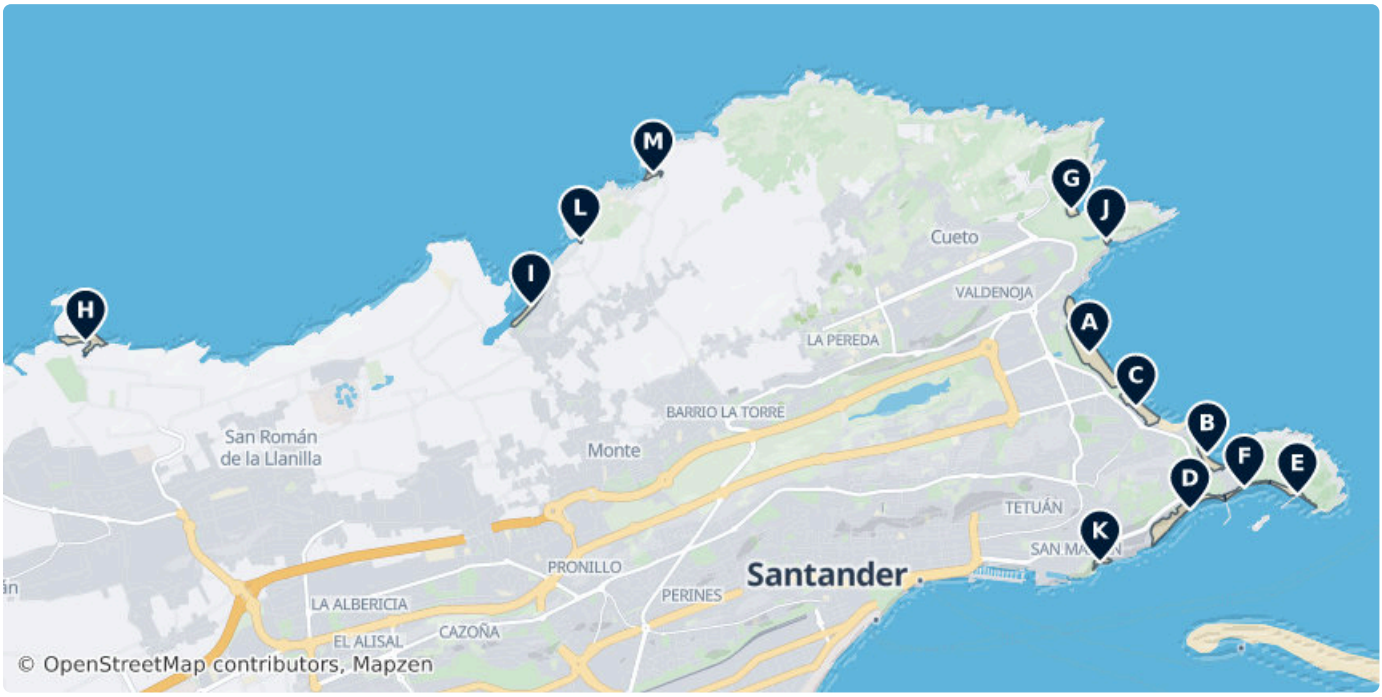
A renowned gastro-bar located near the waterfront, known for its extensive selection of creative pinchos and traditional Cantabrian appetizers served in a contemporary setting.

Paseo de Pereda, 39004 Santander, Spain (43.46261, -3.79733)

casalitasantander.es, +34 942364830

Santander's Coastal Gems

Santander’s coastline features a diverse range of beaches, from the expansive urban sands of El Sardinero to the sheltered coves of the Magdalena Peninsula. The city's maritime heritage is evident at Playa del Camello, known for its distinctive rock formation, and the calm waters of Playa de los Peligros. Further north, the rugged cliffs of Cabo Mayor shield secluded spots like Playa de Mataleñas, while the Virgen del Mar offers a more remote setting with its 14th-century hermitage situated on a tidal island.





A Sardinero Beach

Sardinero is a popular beach located in the Spanish city of Santander, Cantabria.

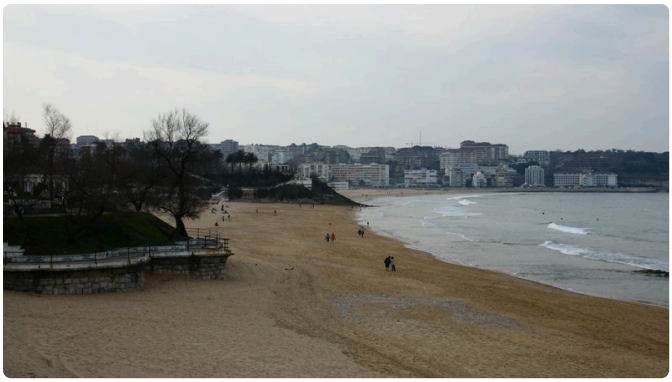
Santander 39005, Spain (43.47642, -3.78639)



B El Camello Beach

Named for a distinctive rock formation resembling a camel visible at low tide, this urban beach is located near the Magdalena Peninsula and features a statue of Neptune.

(Unnamed Road), 39005, Spain (43.46983, -3.77579)



C Primera Playa de El Sardinero

Sardinero is a popular beach located in the Spanish city of Santander, Cantabria.

Santander 39005, Spain (43.47293, -3.78221)



D Playa de los Peligros

A 200-meter urban beach located within the Bay of Santander. It features calm, shallow waters and is connected to the city center via a wooden coastal boardwalk.

38 Avenida de la Reina Victoria, 39005, Spain (43.46622, -3.77735)



E Bikini Beach

Situated on the southern tip of the Magdalena Peninsula, this beach earned its name in the 1960s as a place where foreign students first wore bikinis in the city.

(Unnamed Road), Santander 39005, Spain (43.46721, -3.76768)



F Magdalena Beach

A 900-meter stretch of sand on the Magdalena Peninsula. It faces the Bay of Santander, offering sheltered waters and views of the Los Peligros and Bikinis beaches.

39005, Spain (43.46766, -3.77243)



G Playa de Mataleñas

A secluded cove nestled between the cliffs of Cabo Menor and Cabo Mayor. Access is via a long staircase through the Mataleñas Park and golf course.

Spain (43.48577, -3.78803)



H Playa de la Virgen del Mar

Located next to a small island connected by a bridge, this beach features a 14th-century hermitage dedicated to the city's patron saint, the Virgin of the Sea.

(Unnamed Road), 39012, Spain (43.47719, -3.87670)



I Playa de La Maruca

A rocky beach and traditional fishing harbor in the San Román area. It features a coastal trail leading to the ruins of the Battery of San Pedro.

(Unnamed Road), 39012, Spain (43.47956, -3.83663)

J Playa de los Molinucos

A small, 25-meter natural cove located at the foot of the Mataleñas golf course near Cabo Menor. It is primarily composed of sand and rock.

(Unnamed Road), 39012, Spain (43.48383, -3.78488)

K Playa de La Fenómeno

A small urban beach located near the San Martín promontory within the Bay of Santander.

Avenida Severiano Ballesteros, 39005, Spain (43.46280, -3.78545)

L Playa Rosamunda

A small, rocky beach located in the Monte district, accessible via a coastal path between La Maruca and El Bocal.

(Unnamed Road), 39012, Spain (43.48387, -3.83221)

Playa de El Bocal

A rugged 130-meter beach in the Monte area, characterized by its mixture of sand and gravel. It is located near the Spanish Institute of Oceanography.

39012, Spain (43.48819, -3.82563)

Santander's Historical and Artistic Gems

Santander’s landscape is defined by its defensive history and maritime identity. This collection spans from the 16th-century Renaissance architecture of the Palacio de Riva-Herrera to late 19th-century military fortifications like the Castillo de Corbanera and the Batería de San Pedro del Mar. The city's waterfront features commemorative sculptures including Los Raqueros, which depicts local history, and monuments dedicated to significant figures like cartographer Juan de la Cosa and poet José Hierro. The list also includes the maritime exhibits of Vital Alsar’s rafts and caravels.





A Palacio de Riva-Herrera

Also known as the Palacio de Pronillo, this 16th-century Renaissance structure is the oldest civil building in Santander. It features a defensive tower and was declared a Bien de Interés Cultural.

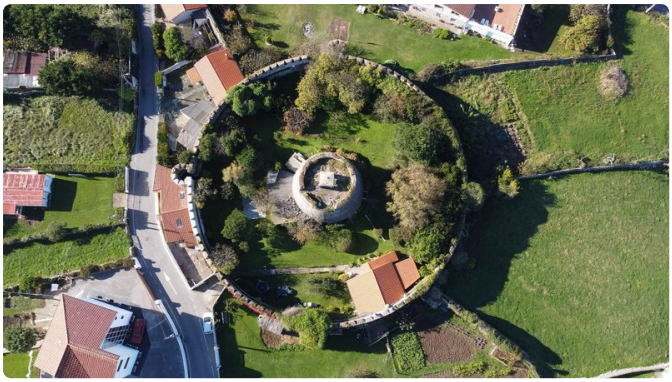
Paseo de Altamira 129A, 39007 Santander
(43.46030, -3.83111)



B Castillo de Corbanera

A circular military fortification built in 1874 to defend the city during the Third Carlist War. It is located in the Monte district near La Maruca.

156 Barrio de Corbanera, Bolado 39012, Spain
(43.47715, -3.83556)



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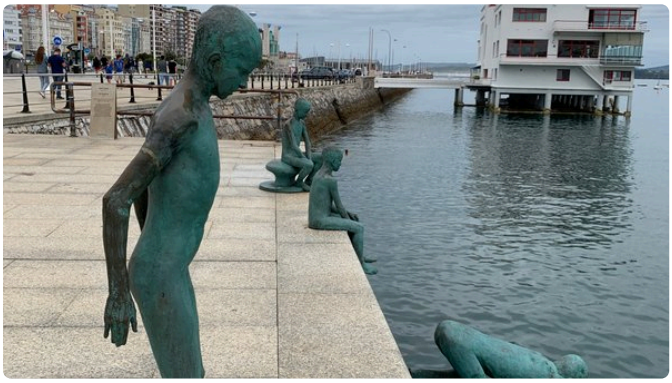
A circular military fortification built in 1874 to defend the city during the Third Carlist War. It is located in the Monte district near La Maruca.

156 Barrio de Corbanera, Bolado 39012, Spain
(43.47715, -3.83555)

D Bateria de San Pedro del Mar

A coastal defense battery located near La Maruca, originally constructed to protect the coastline and the entrance to the city's northern outskirts.

(43.48215, -3.83666)



E Los Raqueros

A group of bronze sculptures by José Cobo Calderón depicting children who used to dive into the bay to retrieve coins thrown by tourists.

34 Paseo de Pereda, Santander 39004, Spain
(43.46189, -3.79819)



F Monumento al Cántabro

A bronze statue located on the coast that pays tribute to the people of Cantabria and their regional identity.

Avenida de Manuel García Lago, Santander 39012, Spain
(43.48166, -3.78703)



G Monumento a Juan de la Cosa

A monument honoring the 15th-century cartographer and explorer Juan de la Cosa, known for creating the first world map that included the Americas.

9 Avenida de Manuel García Lago, Santander 39012, Spain (43.48136, -3.78696)



H Vital Alsar

Vital Alsar Ramírez was a sailor and scientist who made several extremely long sailing expeditions.

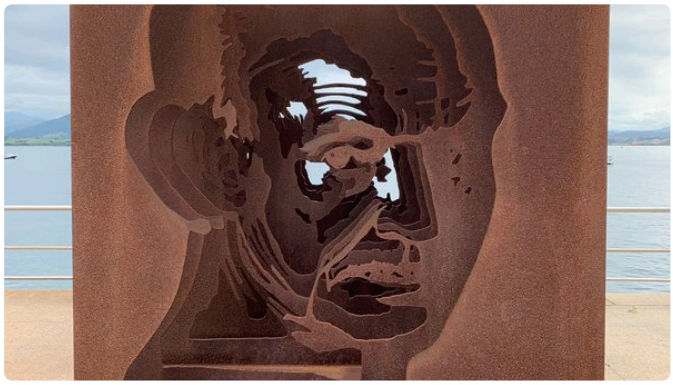
(Unnamed Road), 39005, Spain (43.47066, -3.77081)



I Vital Alsar

Vital Alsar Ramírez was a sailor and scientist who made several extremely long sailing expeditions.

(Unnamed Road), 39005, Spain (43.47069, -3.77055)



J Monumento a José Hierro

A contemporary art installation and monument dedicated to the renowned Santander-born poet José Hierro, located along the city's waterfront.

5 Calle del Puerto Chico, Santander 39004, Spain (43.46196, -3.79779)



K Ángel Herrera Oria

Ángel Herrera Oria was a Spanish journalist and Roman Catholic politician and later a cardinal.

2A Calle de Gómez Oreña, Santander 39003, Spain
(43.46322, -3.80245)

L Puente del PCTCAN

A modern pedestrian and vehicle bridge serving the Scientific and Technological Park of Cantabria (PCTCAN).

Avenida de Severo Ochoa, 39011 Santander, Spain
(43.45405, -3.87216)

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