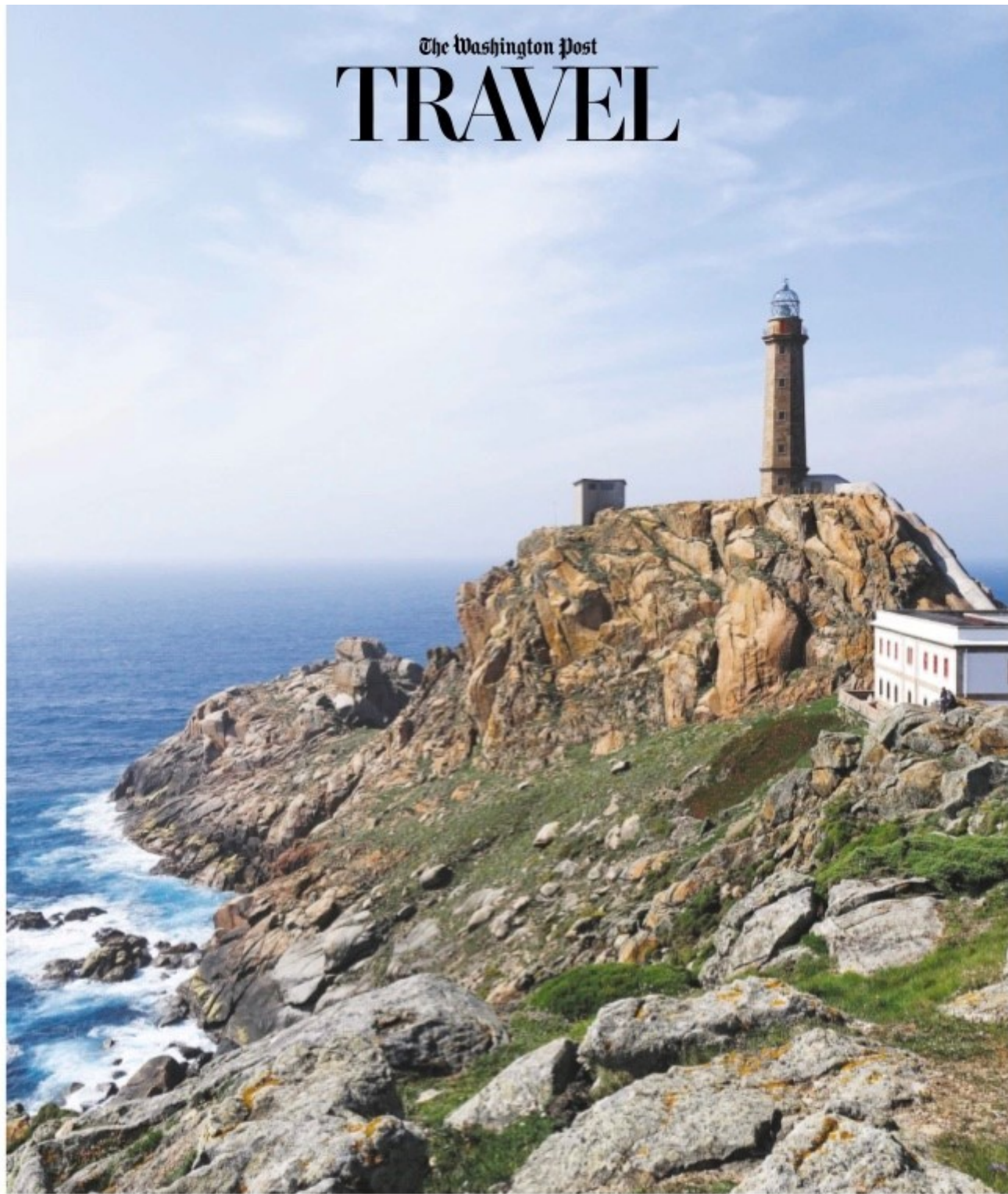


The Washington Post
TRAVEL



DINA MISHEV FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Seeing the light: Camiño dos Faros

A trek along a stretch of Galician Coast lighthouses

BY DINA MISHEV

I am not good at vacations. They are almost always problematic for me and this one — hiking the Lighthouse Way on Spain's Galician Coast — is no different.

I'm traversing a headland glowing gold with blooming French broom and accented with patches of small purple flowers locally called Love's Flowers. (Galicians believe that if you place one of these on someone without their noticing, they'll fall in love with you.) One hundred feet below, waves smash into snaggy cliffs. A mile or so out into the Atlantic Ocean, a sailboat moves quickly. If there were postcards of this off-the-beaten-path corner of Spain's north-west coast, they would be of this scene.

The problem is that by the time I'm walking through this lovely landscape, I'm mentally

frustrated, physically crushed and have blisters that feel like they're the size of baseballs on each heel. Thirty minutes ago, which was almost seven hours and 20-plus miles after I started the day's hike, I might have shouted an impressive stream of obscenities while walking across an empty, one-mile stretch of sand dunes and beaches to keep myself from sitting down and crying.

Most trekkers take eight to 10 days to walk the 125-mile Lighthouse Way. Because my work schedule is tight and I've got extreme FOMO (fear of missing out), I am squeezing the whole trek into six.

Even with my compressed itinerary, my vision for this trip included hiking all morning, afternoon siestas and evenings spent journaling over

The "new" Cape Vilan Lighthouse was built after the HMS *Serpent* sank in 1890 due to a weak light. Its beam can be seen for some 40 miles.

SEE SPAIN ON P. 4



PHOTOS BY DINA MENEZ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A wild week of hiking in Spain

SPAIN FROM P1

dinners of fresh seafood.

The reality so far is a minimum of eight hours of daily walking, not a single siesta and terse nightly journal entries, during which grease stains from dinners of supermarket cheese and prosciutto (because I'm too beat to find a restaurant) ooze onto the pages along with lists of each day's high points and low points.

My problem with vacations isn't that I can't take them, but that I try to cram too much into them.

The Coast of Death

The Lighthouse Way, *Camino dos Faros* in Spanish, traverses a stretch of coast that British sailors in the 19th century dubbed the "Costa da Morte" (Coast of Death) because so many of their compatriots died in shipwrecks there. The route goes between Malpica and Fisterra, Spain. Along the way it is marked by



TOP: A boardwalk on the far side of Praia de Soesto, a beach between Laxe and Camelle on Spain's Galician Coast, was installed so hikers don't have to walk in the loose sand, which is much more taxing. **ABOVE:** The hamlet of O Roncudo in northern Spain and along the Camino dos Faros is a mix of old and new. The farmers use scythes and are surrounded by a wind farm.

haphazardly painted shamrock-green arrows (that often look just like blobs of paint) on trees or rocks. A group of local friends started piecing the Camino together in 2013, connecting fishermen's paths, farm tracks, beaches, livestock trails and the occasional back road. Their goal was to showcase the area's rugged beauty; they succeeded mightily. A typical day's scenery includes eucalyptus and pine forests dappled with light; wetlands; fields divided by dry stone walls; wildflowers; small waterfalls; beaches only accessible by foot; small peaks and sand dunes; sandy coves and headlands spilling down to the ocean.

While the Lighthouse Way's scenery and the hiking are wild, overnight accommodations are not. This is not a backpacking adventure during which you sleep an overstuffed pack and spend nights in a tent. Each day, the Lighthouse Way passes through several villages and towns. You can find your own Airbnb, hotel or inn and hire local taxis to transfer your luggage to the next village or sign up for a self-guided trek that includes all of the reservations and planning, along with GPS tracks and detailed printed topographical maps. I do the latter.

On Foot Holidays offers five-day (64 miles), seven-day (88 miles) and 10-day (125 miles) Lighthouse Way itineraries that include stays at inns and hotels.

SEE SPAIN ON P1

If you go

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Rua Villar

Rua do Vilar, 8-10, Santiago de Compostela
011-34-981-51-98-58
hotelruavillar.com/en

A friendly and cozy boutique hotel with a gorgeous stained glass skylight, dark wood furniture and some interior walls made of stone in the historic part of the city. Rooms, including breakfast, from about \$158.

Casa Luz

Liras, No. 35, Cee
011-34-981-74-89-24

Owner Yolanda might welcome you to her colorful and cozy five room bed and breakfast — the house has been in her family for more than 200 years — with a slice of homemade cake or cookies and a cold beer. Rooms from about \$51; reservations by phone only.

O Semaforo

WHERE TO EAT

As Garzas

Porto Barizo, Barizo
011-34-981-721-785
asgarzas.com

The food is equal to the views at this Michelin-rated restaurant serving modern takes of traditional Galician food right on the Lighthouse Way. Open Tuesday through Sunday — 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. for lunch and 9 to 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday for dinner. Reservations only taken by phone. Seven-course tasting menu costs about \$56; the 13-course one runs about \$90.

Mar de Ardora

As Revoltas — carret. AC 429, Candaeus
011-34-981-754-311
mardeardora.com

Reserve a table looking out at the estuary and Carballa Beach in this old stone house turned into a restaurant Michelin awarded with a Bib Gourmand rating in 2019. The



Casual lunch and dinner spot near Laxe Beach that offers typical tapas, local seafood and great sunset views. Open 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Entrees from about \$17.

O Semaforo Restaurant

Campera del Faro, s/n, Fisterra

Salisbury, U.K.
011-44-0-1722-322-652
onfotholidays.co.uk

On Foot Holidays offers self-guided five, seven and 10-night itineraries of the Lighthouse Way that include baggage transfers

best done mid-April through late June and September to October. The five-night itinerary starts at about \$800, seven nights at about \$960 and ten nights at about \$1,194.

Nariga Point Lighthouse

Between As Garzas and Ninhos Beach
cominootodinos.com/en/Lighthouse-Itinerary/

The most modern lighthouse in Galicia was designed in an Art Deco style by Cesar Portela and built in 1997. Open daily. Free.

Praia de Soesto

Between Laxe and Camelle

The Lighthouse Way passes dozens of beautiful beaches. This wide, 3.4-mile beach has stone picnic tables and benches that offer good vantage points to watch surfers. Free.

Praia da Barreira

A three star (out of a possible three) swimming beach on the Lighthouse Way between Porto do Porto and

struck by lightning on and caught fire on Christmas Day 2013. Some locals believe stones around this church boast curative and prophetic properties — there is the Kidney Stone, the Lovers Stone, and the Rudder Stone. Open daily. Free.

Cape Vilan Lighthouse

Rua Alcalde Fernandez, 54, Camarinas
011-34-981-74-07-91

The only lighthouse along the Camino that will let you into its tower. About \$3.

Cape Finisterre Lighthouse

Fisterra
turismo.gal

In 1598, 25 of the more than 100 ships in King Philip II's Second Armada wrecked off the coast near here and 1,706 sailors died; it was the biggest single loss of ships and life in the history of the Costa da Morte. The lighthouse was built in 1853 as a navigation tool. Today it is a popular tourist