



CICERONI  
T R A V E L

## CAMELLIAS & PILGRIMS SPRING IN GALICIA

THURSDAY 18 - WEDNESDAY 24 MARCH 2021 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN & MANUEL RUZO

£2495

- Visit Galicia in Spring – home to some of the finest collections of camellias in Europe
- Many private visits hosted by the owning families
- A full day exploring historic Santiago de Compostela
- We stay in two fine Paradors in Cambados & Santiago de Compostela
- Excellent food and wine



Vigo, Pazo Quiñones de León, *Camelia Ciudad de Vigo*

### OVERVIEW

Mention the Spanish province of Galicia to most travellers and it is frequently the famous *camino*, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, which rings bells, usually amongst former weary pilgrims perhaps recalling their blisters. However, this remarkable part of north-east Spain is blessed with a micro-climate, a temperate environment with ample rainfall which has created the perfect place to grow a remarkable range of flowering trees and shrubs, above all the camellia.

The camellia has been cultivated in China and Japan for a very long time. It seems that early explorers from Portugal first brought the genus to Europe and it was given its botanical name by the Swedish taxonomist, Karl Linnaeus, in honour of George Kammel (d. 1706), a botanist and apothecary much involved in Jesuit missionary activities in the Philippines. *Camellia sinensis* was first cultivated by the Chinese to provide tea but the ornamental value of this shrub-like tree was widely appreciated by the time it arrived in Europe, wherever its ultimate source of introduction may have lain?

The north-west coastline of Iberia proved ideal to grow the earliest introductions, though no one is sure of the date of their arrival. By the early eighteenth century, it was cultivated in England, though always protected under glass - probably *Camellia japonica* rather than *Camellia sinensis*. By the early nineteenth century the French had discovered that the camellia could survive out of doors and thus liberated, it began to be widely grown. Many new cultivars were bred and in 1820 Richard Rawes introduced the first *Camellia reticulata* cultivar.

Botanists and grandee gardeners began to publish lavish, illustrated books on the genus and by the early twentieth century camellia mania had taken hold throughout Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The introduction of the first European hybrid, developed by J. C. Williams of Cornwall in the 1930s, sparked a new chapter in camellia breeding.

It will be an exciting week spent exploring some of the very best camellia collections in Europe, together with many other flowering trees and shrubs. We shall be welcomed and guided by the owners as we see collections full of historic cultivars, together with many new introductions from all over the world. Indeed, our visit will combine the best of horticultural, artistic and religious traditions as we shall also encounter many sites associated with the famous pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

The visit will be led by Tom Duncan and Manuel Ruzo, one of Galicia's most respected guides, supported by David Sketchley. We stay in two Paradors: the modern **4\* Parador de Cambados** is in the centre of the pretty coastal town of Cambados where we shall spend four nights. We also stay for two nights at the **5\* Parador de Santiago de Compostela**, one of the most architecturally distinguished Paradors in Spain.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Thursday 18 March – We fly directly from Heathrow to the coastal town of **La Coruña** and drive south to **Cambados** for a stay of four nights at the **4\* Parador de Cambados**. Dinner will be in our hotel.

**Day 2:** Friday 19 March – Our first visit will be to the **Pazo de Rubiáns** near **Pontevedra**, the estate of the Marquesa de Aranda. A *pazo* is the Galician dialect word for a country seat, derived from the Latin *palatium*, or palace. The garden contains over one hundred species of camellia and endless hundreds of hybrids planted over several hectares. We shall also visit the Marquesa's home, magnificently furnished. After a light lunch at the Pazo the afternoon visit will be spent at the nearby **Pazo de La Saleta**. Originally laid out for English clients by the distinguished landscape architect Brenda Colvin, the present Spanish owners continue to add trees, shrubs and of course, camellias - a wonderful oasis. We return to Cambados and the evening will be free. This charming sea-side town has some decent restaurants from which to choose, many specialising in fish.

**Day 3:** Saturday 20 March – We drive down towards **Vigo** to visit the **Castelo de Soutomaior**, standing guard over twenty-five hectares, considered to be the most important botanic garden in Galicia. Continuing into Vigo, there will be some free time for lunch, not included today, and later we visit **Pazo Quiñones de León**. Laid out from 1860 and thus one of the oldest gardens of its kind in the area, it passed into the hands of the city some years ago and it has both a formal 'English' style garden and some very fine camellias. We return to Cambados and dinner will be in a local 1\* Michelin restaurant.

**Day 4:** Sunday 21 March – Our morning will be spent at **Pazo Quinteiro da Cruz**, near **Ribadumia** where over 5000 camellias happily grow side by side with the family's famous vines. The owner, Pedro Piñeiro, will be our host for the visit, followed by Sunday lunch at the Pazo. We return to Cambados and the late afternoon and evening will be free.

**Day 5:** Monday 22 March – We leave Cambados and en route to Santiago we visit the justly famed **Pazo de Oca**, a seat of the Duke of Segorbe and one of the most magical of the houses and gardens we shall see? A series of historic interiors in the Pazo are surrounded by acres of plantings added in recent years – an unforgettable experience, culminating in lunch! Nearby we visit **Pazo Santa Cruz de Rivadulla**, a historic estate with a wonderfully atmospheric garden, laid out over a gently sloping site. We continue to the architecturally distinguished **5\* Parador** in **Santiago de Compostela** for two nights and dinner this evening will be in the Parador's restaurant.

**Day 6:** Tuesday 23 March – **Santiago de Compostela** is a most historic place, dedicated to the legend of St James and centre of one of Europe's most important pilgrimage sites. We shall spend the day exploring the city's historic centre, including some of its gardens. Lunch is not included today and our final dinner will be in an excellent 1\* Michelin restaurant.

**Day 7:** Wednesday 24 March – We leave the hotel after breakfast for **La Coruña** Airport and the direct return flight to Heathrow.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2495    **Price without flights** £2370    **Deposit** £375    **Single Supplement** £270 (Double for Sole Use)

**Hotels** 4 nights with breakfast at 4\* Parador de Cambados, 2 nights with breakfast at 5\* Parador de Santiago de Compostela

**Flights** Vueling

Outward: **VY7105** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 3) **1350** arrive La Coruña **1650**

Return: **VY7104** Depart La Coruña **1145** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 3) **1245**

**Price includes** 4 dinners & 3 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan, Manuel Ruzo, & our local tour manager, David Sketchley

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 2 dinners & 3 lunches



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