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LA RIOJA  
*Apeteece*

[www.lariojaapetece.com](http://www.lariojaapetece.com)

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*Vineyards below San Lorenzo Mountain.*

## A walk through La Rioja

La Rioja is Spain's smallest region. However, it is not easy to find in such small area —just over five thousand square kilometres— such a diversity of landscapes, art, history and traditions. It is located in a privileged enclave at the heart of the Ebro Valley, a natural crossroads that has given it a multifarious character where coexistence and harmony rule in diversity.

This land has earned worldwide fame thanks to one of its products, whose finely crafted quality has achieved universal renown —wine. When you say Rioja you are saying wine; something so intimately linked to this land that, on occasion, both are confused with each other and superimposed. Exceptional natural conditions, together with the know-how acquired during centuries of oenological culture, make it possible for a new vintage to arise every autumn —an unparalleled credential to initiate us into the knowledge of a space and a people who will undoubtedly surprise us; a passport for a journey with personality to the Land with the Name of a Wine: **La Rioja**.



*Discover the dinosaur tracks.*



*Santo Domingo de la Calzada.*



*A small pleasure to enjoy in La Rioja: to gaze at the twilight in the shadow of an oak tree.*



# The land with the Name of a Wine

In La Rioja, wine is discernible. The region, sprinkled with vineyards, constitutes a crossroads and meeting place of the cultures of the various peoples who chose this land to fill their cups. In the Ebro Valley, where you abandon the damp Spain of the north on your way to the Castilian plateau, you will find the culture of wine. La Rioja proposes that you experience it with your five senses.



La Rioja, a land of wineries with a past, present and future.

Hundreds of **bodegas** (wineries), from the oldest to the most avant-garde, open their doors to you to show you how grapes are tenderly pampered until they transform into wine. You will discover how the most ancestral and most modern techniques coexist in this land. You will learn how Riojans, always with an eye on the seasons, live for this culture from one generation to the next.

A visit to La Rioja always turns into a journey to the **world of wine**. A tour of our bodegas allows you to understand the evolution of this product, particularly since the establishment of the great bodegas of the 19th century, with spectacular modern designs, conceived by great architects —always, however, preserving the tradition of the winemaking techniques they learned from their grandparents.

But the journey into the world of wine of La Rioja does not exclusively involve visiting wineries. You have to come out to the **vineyards**, learn about their history and their art, enjoy a wine tasting session, and pair each glass with its best companion: Riojan cuisine.



Guided tour of the heart of a bodega.



Racking.



Traditional cellar.



A world to discover, art among the barrels.





*Strolling through vineyards.*



*Vivanco Museum of the Culture of Wine.*



*Tools of the traditional winery.*

## A thousand plans for a wine

There are over a thousand activities in La Rioja related to wine —a wide range of possibilities that provide enjoyment for both beginners and experts. You can even partake in ventures for teetotallers and children... All you have to do is choose the time of the year and the right company to enjoy them with.



*At the wineries, you can learn the wine production process, first hand!*

The journey into the world of wine can begin at the **Vivanco Museum of the Culture of Wine**, in the lovely medieval town of Briones. In this great museum —the result of a passion for wine of a Riojan family of winemakers— visitors can discover all the processes involved in changing grapes into our star product and, particularly, the influence that wine has had on culture throughout the world, with pieces from ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece to modern Picassos. After learning about the history, you have to move into the practice. The best way is to visit the **vineyards** with a guide (or by yourself) and walk among them, discovering their changing beauty from one season to the next.

But there are other ways of enjoying wine in La Rioja, even without drinking it —for instance, relaxing during a **vinotherapy** treatment that places the grape's properties at the service of beauty and health.



*Ageing barrels.*



# With your five senses

Enjoy a winetasting, uncovering aromas by making the wine dance in the glass like the dancers of Anguiano, an ancestral Riojan tradition where men on high stilts leap downhill, their colourful skirts awlirl. That is how wine dances and that is how you will appreciate its colour and aromas.



*Distinguishing aromas.*



*Winetasting course.*

The adventure of **tasting** begins with hearing —the unmistakable sound of uncorking, and the joyful splash of the liquid against the sides of the glass or decanter. Regale your eyes with the intense cherry-red colour of the best Rioja reds.

The **aroma** of the oak barrels lets you distinguish between young wines, and Crianza and Reserva wines. The sense of touch you can employ in your mouth, when the tannins and alcohols caress your taste buds with their softness or astringency. The final sip fills your mouth with sensations and nuances you never imagined. In La Rioja we are going to teach you how to understand and enjoy wine.



*Preparing a tasting of a Rioja.*



*Learning about the world of wine in a winery.*





*Rioja and garden produce from the Ebro valley.*



*Cured meat morsels.*



*Tapa of duck foie and goat cheese.*



*Vegetable menestra.*



*White button mushrooms.*

## A perfect pairing

Of course, the wine of La Rioja never comes alone. Wherever you find good wine, you will find good food. Of this, La Rioja is a prime example.



*The famous Laurel Street in Logroño.*

One of the best plans for both those who visit La Rioja and for Riojans themselves is to go to the famous **Calle Laurel** in Logroño and enjoy the simplest way of pairing Rioja wine —with the speciality tapas of each bar. There are tapas —here they are known as pinchos— for all tastes, from the classic grilled white button mushrooms to elaborate creations with unusual names. Getting to know the Matrimonios, Valentinos, Cojonudos, Tío Agus and many other pinchos may require several visits but it will always be worth your while.

Another more sophisticated option offered is a pairing menu at a **Riojan restaurant** —a true art in La Rioja. All our restaurants care for their wines as if they were jewels. Do not miss the opportunity of enjoying food in which each dish is accompanied by the wine that best underscores its qualities and enhances its flavours. Let yourself be guided and enjoy a perfect pairing.



*Rioja, the best dining companion.*



## Varied, delicious gastronomy

Everywhere in the world where excellent wine is made, you will find excellent food. Of this, La Rioja is a prime example.

La Rioja has a network of rivers that irrigate its rich **vegetable gardens**, offering the best ingredients for its star **vegetable dishes**—from artichokes, cardoon and borage, to the superb combination of all of them in our exceptional vegetable menestra.



Potatoes and chorizo.



Artisan foods of La Rioja Baja.

**Meat** is also another outstanding product of this land, thanks to the green pastures of the region's southern hills, where top-quality livestock graze in traditional fashion. Here, you can enjoy excellent beef from the Cameros or partake in the unique pleasure of tasting our mountain lamb chops grilled over vine cane embers.

Although an interior region, La Rioja also offers some speciality **fish** dishes, particularly cod. Some of the dishes of yesteryear, such as our grandmothers used to make, can still be found in our land. Also you should taste such delicacies as lamb's trotters, by themselves (patitas) or wrapped in chitterlings (patorrillo), embuchados (lamb chitterling balls) and snails in tomato sauce.

The local **desserts** are the perfect ending to a delicious meal. La Rioja keeps alive traditional sweets from its Arabic past, such as the fardelejos from Arnedo —delicious fried almond cakes— and the famous soto marzipan— originally made in the town of Soto en Cameros.



Flambéed pears stewed in Rioja wine.



Grilled vegetables.



Lamb chops grilled over vine cane embers.



Cod Riojan style.



*Santa María de la Piscina. Peciña (San Vicente de la Sonsierra).*



*Virgen de la Luz Hermitage (Lumbreras).*



## Culture reserve

The first traces of habitation in La Rioja date back many thousands of years before the appearance of man, when the landscape was very different and huge dinosaurs roamed the land, leaving tracks that we can still admire today.



*Contrebia-Leucade. Aguilar del Río Alhama.*

The wealth of this land on the banks of the river Ebro has always attracted people. One of the oldest settlements in La Rioja is the Celtiberian town of **Contrebia Leucade**. Calahorra has a memorable Roman past. The Arabs left their legacy and legends, such as that of the **Battle of Clavijo** with the appearance of the White Horse of Saint James. In medieval times, the monasteries became repositories for vast cultural wealth and, in modern times, the wine industry prompted a true revolution leading to the development of the region.

But the cultural life of La Rioja does not end in its ample history; it continues in our days with avant-garde projects in the arts, architecture, stage arts, music, etc.



*Santa Eulalia Somera cave.*



*Palaeontological Center of La Rioja (Igea).*



*Woman from Calahorra.*



*Romanesque church of San Cristóbal, Canales de la Sierra.*



*La Redonda Cathedral, Logroño.*





## Birthplace of the Spanish language

In the convulsive medieval times, when the lords fought to conquer and defend their lands, hermits retired to small caves —forerunners of great monasteries, full of activity in their cloisters, kitchens, pharmacies and, particularly, their scriptoria and libraries.

*Interior of Suso.*



*Yuso Monastery of San Millán.*



It was in the scriptorium of **San Millán de la Cogolla** where a Riojan monk wrote on the margin of Codex 46, which was written in Latin, the **first words to be written in Spanish**. This small sentence in Romance, explaining the main Latin text, is the first trace of a language that today is spoken by over 400 million people around the world.

If Codex 46, whose copy concluded in the Monastery of La Cogolla on 13 June 964 represents the beginnings of the Spanish language, a Riojan from the same valley, **Gonzalo de Berceo**, who lived and wrote during the first half of the 13th century, represents the beginnings of Spanish literature.



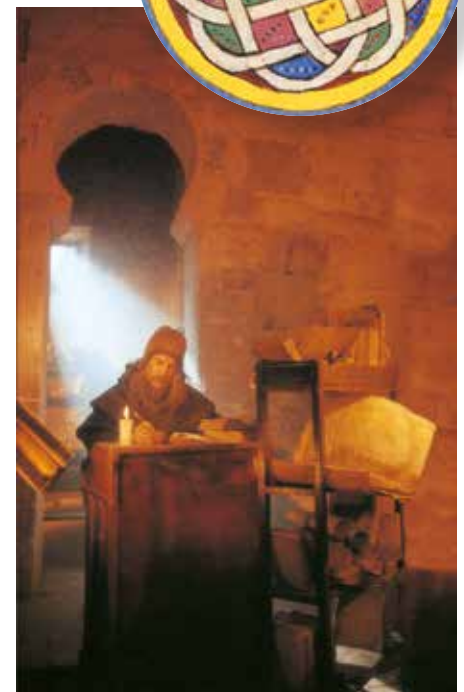
*Suso Monastery of San Millán.*



*Songbook.*

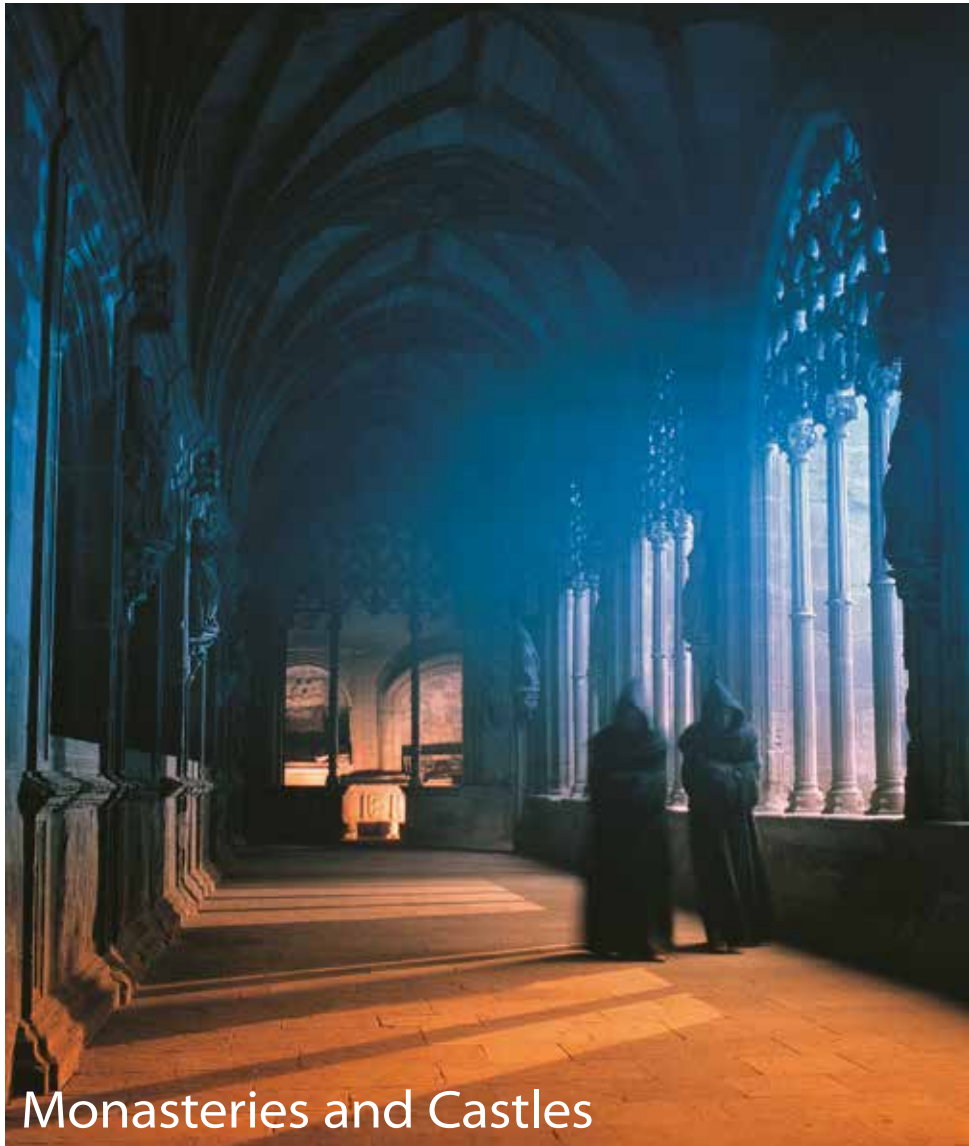


*Tomb of San Millán in Suso.*



*Recreation of medieval desk.*





## Monasteries and Castles

*Cloister of Santa María la Real. Nájera.*

The richness and tradition of Riojan monasteries is not limited to San Millán de la Cogolla. For over ten centuries, many spiritual centres have been maintained in La Rioja as places for retirement, prayer and culture, built in locations that kept them apart from the decadence of Roman towns during the Visigothic era.



*Castle of Cornago.*



*Castle of Sajazarra.*

The lands of La Rioja are full of history and legends thanks to their **monasteries**. Of some we only have a few ruins and the documents that attest to their influence in the middle ages. But many have preserved their buildings and the activity of their religious communities through the centuries and now they are attractive destinations for cultural, religious and artistic tourism.

Borderlands such as La Rioja are always dotted with **castles** that attest to the fights between opposing factions to control a fertile land that was coveted by all. Many Riojan castles have been lost but others have survived and been turned into wineries, town halls or private homes, allowing visitors to relive unique historical moments.



*Monastery of Ntra. Sra. de la Piedad.*



*Castle of Cuzcurrita.*





Pilgrim in front of the Church of Santiago in Logroño.



Doing the Way on horseback...

## St. James Way

The Pilgrims' Way to St James, known as the 'Camino de Santiago' in Spanish, is the first European Cultural Itinerary to be declared by the Council of Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage. It is one of the most widely-used tourist routes to learn about the history, art and culture of La Rioja.



Pilgrims' Market. Santo Domingo de la Calzada.



Pilgrim crossing La Rioja.

Since the tomb of the Apostle St James was discovered in Compostela, Galicia, the Way has served to transmit new ideas, techniques, cultures, and ways of life among the regions and towns it crosses.

Logroño is the meeting point of the **French Route**, which comes through the Pyrenees into Navarre and Aragon, and **the Ebro Route**, which comes up from the Mediterranean on the Roman road that linked Tarragona and Astorga, passing through the towns of La Rioja that flourished in Roman times —Alfaro, Calahorra and Varea.

The Way of St James in La Rioja allows you to cross vineyards, learn about famous medieval legends such as that of the battle of Clavijo and the **Hanged Pilgrim of Santo Domingo**, and enjoy the Jacobean atmosphere.



Collegiate church in Alfaro.



Stone Bridge, entrance of the St James Way into Logroño.



Streets of Santo Domingo de La Calzada.



Monument to the Pilgrim.



# Popular Culture

La Rioja is a land with a wealth of feasts and traditions, inherited from an ancient past with the personal character of Riojans, who are always ready to feast and celebrate. There are all types of festivities, most of which are cultural or religious, although there are also food festivals, cattle fairs and, of course, feasts related to wine.



*The Picaos during Holy Week in San Vicente de la Sonsierra.*



*Dance of the Stilts of Anguiano.*

Some feasts have been declared of Tourist interest, such as the **Dancers of Anguiano**, where the young men of this mountain village whirl down a steep street on stilts wearing showy yellow skirts.

The **Battle of Wine** in Haro is also a curious feast, turning the best-known product of La Rioja into a projectile weapon. Wine is also the star of the **Harvest Festival** in Logroño. As well, there are religious celebrations with deep-felt traditions, such as **the Picaos** in San Vicente de la Sonsierra and the **Fiestas del Santo** in Santo Domingo de la Calzada.



*Holy Week Mercaforum in Calahorra.*



*Procession of Maidens during the Fiestas del Santo in Santo Domingo de la Calzada.*



*Battle of Wine in Haro.*



*Chronicles of Nájera, Kingdom of Nájera.*





Night snowfall in San Andrés and Berceo.

## Discovering streets and corners

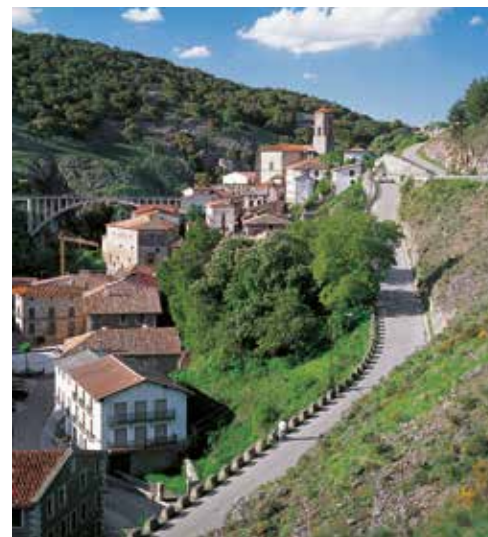
The best of La Rioja can be found in its streets, squares and corners. Visit its cities and villages and get to know Riojans. Follow your own routes. The best way to discover La Rioja is by car, and on foot. Stop in the small villages that dot the Riojan landscape to discover their cobbled streets, buy freshly-baked bread and drink a glass of wine with the locals, who will tell you how grapes are grown, how they have spent their whole life working in the fields, and how one of the best wines in the world is made.



Calahorra Cathedral.



Nalda and the crags of the Iregua Valley.



Ortigosa de Cameros.



Fountain of the Three Spigots. Viniegra de Abajo.

You can also visit the cities: **Logroño**, the capital, with its avenues and picturesque sites, like the Plaza de Abastos, the Plaza del Mercado and, of course, the Calle del Laurel, with a bar in each building and a speciality in each bar; **Calahorra**, with its Roman heritage; **Haro**, with the wealth and splendour of its best wines; **Santo Domingo de la Calzada**, with its tradition, closely linked to the Way of St James; **Nájera**, with its close ties to royalty; **Arnedo**, with its shoe industry and factory outlets; **Cervera**, with its espadrilles and traditional culture, and **Torrecilla en Cameros**, with its livestock raising and transhumance traditions. Each stopover on your journey will provide you with a unique experience.



Streets in Ezcaray.





Lookout at Los Sotos de Alfaro.

## Landscapes and nature

La Rioja is Spain's smallest region but one of the wealthiest in biodiversity and landscape. The community is crossed by the Ebro from west to east and another seven rivers form beautiful valleys running south to north, from the Peaks of the Sierra de la Demanda and Sierra de Cameros to the Ebro Valley.



Sierra Cebollera Nature Reserve.

Each of these valleys is different. The **River Oja**, which may well have given its name to this land ('Río Oja' in Spanish), springs from the Sierra de la Demanda, among the highest peaks in La Rioja. The River **Najerilla** flows near some of La Rioja's most important places, such as the Monastery of Our Lady of Valvanera, patron saint of La Rioja, and the Monasteries of Suso and Yuso, and then crosses Nájera on its way to the **Ebro**.

The River **Iregua** comes down from the Sierra Cebollera and its nature park, a unique place of breathtaking beauty, particularly in autumn, when ochre and orange hues begin to glow in the treetops. The River **Leza** slowly descends from the Camero Viejo mountains, creating a spectacular canyon where griffon vultures nest. The **Jubera** crosses lands that have been worked by man for many centuries, visiting on its way the ruins of ancient monasteries and castles.

The River **Cidacos** visits the lands of Riojan dinosaurs and its waters mix with the warm water from the thermal springs of Arnedillo. The River **Alhama**, the easternmost in La Rioja, passes through some of the most recondite locations and the most arid landscapes, flowing into Navarre to return to La Rioja in Alfaro, a town that is famous for its stork colony and its luxuriant copses on the banks of the River Ebro.



Cascade of the Jubera River.



Crag of the Iregua Valley.



Fields of Berceo, Estollo and San Millán de La Cogolla.



# Welcoming hearth

Riojans are hospitable by nature. Their houses, with their open hearth lit, are welcoming for visitors. This is also the case of rural accommodation in La Rioja. The food and wine help this welcome and you will find it easy to find lodgings with complete wine tourism programmes —visits to wineries, tastings, vinotherapy... Some are even to be found in the bodegas themselves.



Visiting a wine bar.



Laurel Street in Logroño.



Pears in Rioja red wine.



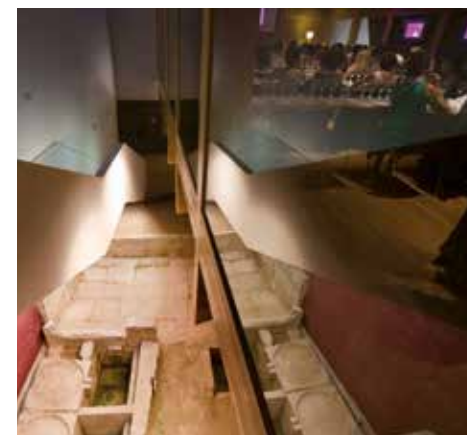
Tasting a signature wine.



Country house in El Rasillo.

The **cities** of La Rioja also offer efficient hotels and hotels brimming with history, in unique locations of the town centre, or where you can enjoy the peace of mountain landscapes and valleys dotted with vineyards.

The warm welcome of Riojans is evident in the **restaurants** that offer the best recipes where they will explain the typical dishes; in **bars**, each with their pincho (tapa) speciality; on the **streets** where Riojans talk about the grape harvest or the price of grapes; in the **tourist offices**, where you obtain suggestions and information about the most attractive places; in the **shops**, where you can buy a unique bottle of wine or a typical Riojan sweet... Let yourself be carried away and you will feel at home —or even better than at home.



Espacio Lagares in Logroño.



Hotel in Logroño.



Riojaforum Restaurant. Logroño.



Rural Hotel in Valgañón.





Paragliding above Berceo.



Visiting the Route of the Dinosaurs.



Sotos del Ebro Nature Reserve in Alfaro.



Cebollera Mountain Range.

## Sports tourism

The forests, the mountains and the valleys of our land keep, like a treasure of our elders, all the strength of virgin nature, brimming with life, waiting to be discovered by those who, respecting its serene beauty, wish to come close to it.



Observing the stars in La Rioja.



Excursion with snowshoes.

On foot, on horseback or on a bicycle, you can travel along the footpaths and tracks that will teach you our history, our traditions and the most friendly corners of a land that is waiting to be discovered with each step.

All of this is accompanied by the warmth of the people of our land, who will turn your days of "active rest" in La Rioja into **a set of cascading sensations** to share with your family and friends and to recover the emotion of respect for nature.

Collecting wild fruit, observing the flight of vultures, contemplating the rooftops and steeples with their storks' nests, listening to the bellowing of wild deer, bathing in thermal waters, looking for marine fossils and discovering dinosaur tracks... are among the many activities that you can enjoy in contact with the natural resources of La Rioja.



Cascades of Puente Ra. Sierra Cebollera.



## Golf, skiing and water sports

How about a game of golf? The St James Way crosses La Grajera, an impressive golf course in the midst of a delightful park in Logroño, the town where you should go for your shopping. In the towns of Sojuela and Cirueña you will also find modern, complete golf courses at the level of the most demanding golfers.



Water sports in El Rasillo.



Windsurfing with the Cameros mountains in the background.



Would you like to enjoy the snow? Pick up your skis and discover the white slopes of the **Valdezcaray** ski resort, under the majestic peak of San Lorenzo (2,260 m), the highest point in La Rioja ruling over the Sierra de la Demanda.

What about water sports? In the mountain reservoir of **El Rasillo**, you will discover a paradise for practising windsurfing and canoeing surrounded by a lovely forest. The best thing that will satiate your appetite for sports are the cuisine and wine you will be offered after your adventure!



Golf in La Grajera, Logroño.



Skiing in Valdezcaray.





The Conference Centre and Auditorium of La Rioja, **Riojaforum**, in Logroño, is fully equipped with the latest technologies and prepared to host any event or convention.

When your work is over, it is time to enjoy yourself again. The luxury of a **hotel** for you and your companions, all types of **shops**, the best restaurants. In La Rioja, the best meetings are accompanied by the best wine!



## Business

Would you like to have a business meeting in the style of La Rioja? We have everything you need. Your meetings, conferences, incentive trips for clients and employees can take place in our region and lead you onto the path to success. La Rioja is captivating and it has anything you need close to hand. Time will fly if you choose the Logroño-Agoncillo airport.



*Riojaforum Conference Centre and Auditorium of La Rioja.*



*Rioja wine is always on the lists of local restaurants.*