



On the way to San Millán coming from Nájera is where the last vineyards are located, near the mountain area, where the climate is no longer suitable for grapevine cultivation. In Badarán, visitors will find, in addition to the delicious **sauces and bread**, an excellent range of wine tourism options, for both groups as well as individuals.

Badarán

Visiting Wineries



Hall of the Monastery of Yuso.

Chest of San Millán de Yuso.

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Monument to Gonzalo de Berceo.

Since the first written embodiment of the Spanish language was produced between the Emilian walls, then the same language earned the status of a poetic language and thus, of universality, without the need to change locations, because **the first poet** with a name, personality and complete work known in the Spanish language came from the same valley of San Millán: Gonzalo de Berceo.

Gonzalo de Berceo



Glosses of Saint Emilianus.

The text or codex that the glossator was reading is the one known as Amiliana. Of these notes, the ones written in the Romance language were, until recently, considered to be the earliest written record of the Castilian roman language. In addition, glosses or dictionaries are also being studied, which represent an authentic philological work about the evolution of Latin into Spanish.

There, in the 11th century, around 1040, someone who was either a student or a teacher, was having difficulty understanding certain expressions of the Latin text he was reading (Latin was the cultured language used for writing, but people communicated in vulgar Latin, in an "unrefined" Latin, which would later become Spanish), did what has always been normal: next to the expression that seemed obscure, he wrote another one to translate it and make it understandable.

The most unique and remarkable fact about the monasteries of San Millán de la Cogolla is that this is where the first sentences were written, that have been found, in the Romance language that in the present day is known as Castilian or Spanish.

The Glosses of Saint Emilianus

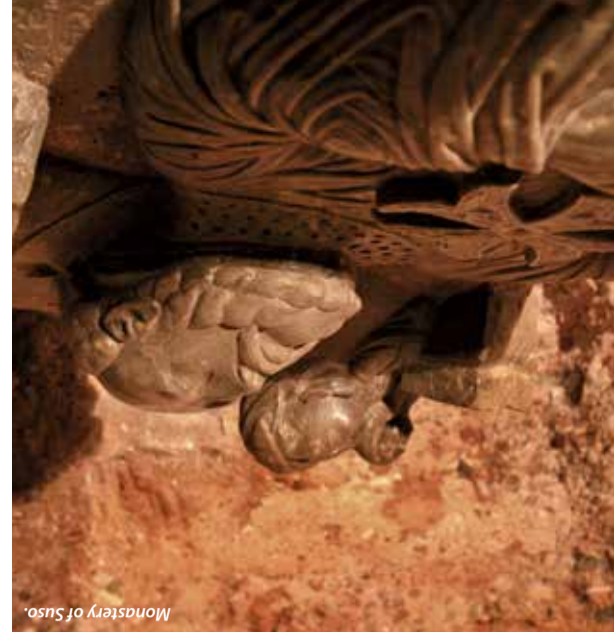


Cloister of San Millán de Yuso.

However, this area is not only a first-rate religious and cultural place, but it also offers visitors the chance to enjoy one of the most interesting scenic and natural environments in La Rioja, with its dense forests and snow-covered peaks. There are numerous trails throughout the area surrounding San Millán de la Cogolla and other nearby towns.



Paragliders over Berceo.



Monastery of Suso.

The town is made up of three quarters. The oldest quarter is the one traditionally known as "Santurde" which, according to data from the monastery archives, already existed in the 9th century. After the construction of the Monastery of Yuso, the town started to expand in the direction of the monastery, thereby forming another quarter, known as "Barrionuevo".

Nowadays it is known as the Chapel of Santa Potamia. Around Yuso, different buildings were constructed, which were associated with it, such as the old monastery hospital, mills, and

Discover San Millán de la Cogolla

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San Millán de la Cogolla

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Monastery of Suso

The Monastery of **San Millán de Suso** ("Suso" from the Latin "sursum" means "up") came out of the caves where the hermit disciples of Saint Emilianus lived, in the 6th century, around the cave that held his remains. The expansion that continued until the 12th century turned those caves into a cenobium and a monastery. Among the different architectural styles that were increasingly overlapping between the 6th and 11th centuries, the following can be observed: Visigothic, Mozarabic and Romanesque.

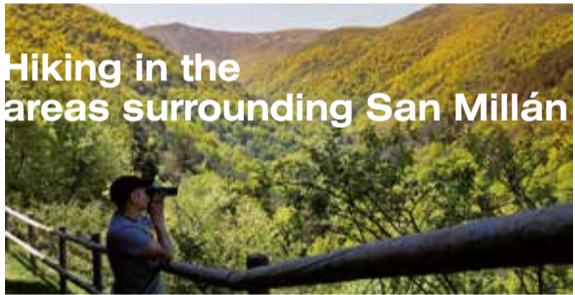
In the early days of the arrival of the Visigoths in the Peninsula, the **anchorite Aemilianus** (Emilianus), the son of a shepherd and native of Vergégium, modern-day Berceo, withdrew to this place. He lived here in seclusion until his death, at the age of 101, and was buried in a tomb dug out of rock. We know about his life thanks to the account written in the year 635 by the bishop of Zaragoza, named Braulio, and translated into Spanish by Gonzalo de Berceo, who was educated there.



Burial cave.

The small monastery was built around the hermit's **rock cell** in a place of great beauty, in the middle of a dense forest. In the first stage, (5th and early 6th centuries) caves were dug out, taking advantage of the hollows in the ground. Between the 6th and 7th centuries, the first structure was completed, designed to be a meeting place. It consisted of two vaulted compartments, of which the walls and several of the **Visigothic arches** are still preserved today.

In the first half of the 10th century, the **Mozarabic monastery** was built and consecrated in 959 by **García Sánchez I**, the first monarch to live in Nájera. This is the stage in which the church's entrance gallery was built, as well as the main nave with caliph-style vaults and horseshoe arches. In the year 1002, **Almanzor** set fire to this monastery, and as a result, the pictorial decorations and the Mozarabic stucco were lost.



GR-93 Ezcaray – San Millán

The GR-93 crosses the entire Riojan mountain range. The **first stretch** of this great touring trail is 16.5 kilometers long. It connects the towns of **Ezcaray** and **San Millán de la Cogolla**, passing through **Turza**, **Pazuengos** and **Lugar del Río**. Between Ezcaray and Pazuengos, the path crosses meadows bordered by wooded forests creating scenery that is typically Cantabrian, which is fully displayed in the valley of the Oja. At the boundary of Pazuengos, the path goes through beeches and oak forests, but near Lugar del Río the scenery is made up of terraced crops, which are currently abandoned and used by the cattle for extensive pastures.

GR-93 San Millán – Anguiano

The **second stretch** of this trail, 22 kilometers long, connects **San Millán de la Cogolla** and **Anguiano**. There is diverse mid-mountain scenery with beech, Pyrenean oak and holm oak forests, as well as some scots pine plantations. Between **Tobía** and Anguiano there are spectacular crags, one after another, that mark the transition between Valle del Ebro and the Mountain. Matute is a town in the high area, with a church from the 16th century (Church of San Román). **Anguiano** is located on the Najerilla River, the mightiest and best maintained river in La Rioja. Outside of the town center, we can visit the monastery that is home to the patroness of La Rioja, the **Virgin of Valvanera**.

The Steps of the Saint - Route of the Saint's Cave:

It has an approximate duration of four hours, is linear, and completely marked out. Leaving the parking lot of the Monastery of Yuso and heading towards Lugar del Río, you will reach a rest area with a shelter and tables. This site is known as **"La Eméndula"**. You must follow the path that begins on the left, and in twenty minutes you will arrive in **Cueva del Santo**, which is a small chapel.

The Steps of the Saint - Route of Gonzalo de Berceo:

It has an approximate duration of two hours. Since it is a circular path, we will use the **Monastery of Yuso** as a starting reference point, and we will cross the town of San Millán to arrive in Berceo, and from there we will head to the **Monastery of Suso** by road (it is important to know that walking up to Suso does not mean that you will be able to go inside the monastery, unless you are in possession of the appropriate ticket). From Suso, we take the path that will lead us once again to the Monastery of Yuso.



View of Suso.

In 1030, **Sancho III, the Great** restored and expanded the monastery and added two more semicircular arches to the existing horseshoe ones. Finally, in the 11th and 12th centuries, other additions were made with walls and semicircular arches in front of the original caves.

The **entrance to the monastery** goes through the portaleyo. This is where the tombs of the **Infantes of Lara** are located, along with their guardian, Nuño, accompanying the three Navarre queens. They are known for the «Romance of the Seven Infantes of Lara», based on an old lost chanson de geste which, together with "The Poem of the Cid," is one of the most important in Castilian literature.

Through the **Mozarabic arch** with alabaster capitals that have geometric and plant motifs, we enter the Mozarabic monastery. In the back, we observe the rest of the original Visigoth construction.



The **burial cave** has a preserved tombstone of the founder from the 12th century, made from black alabaster and decorated with his lying sculpture, clothed with priestly garments, an alb, chasuble, and a stole with a notable cross on his chest, which today we refer to as the "Cross of Saint Emilianus," but was originally a liturgical object called a "portapaz."

The cultural importance of Suso is expressed in the collection of **manuscripts and codices** that came out of its written works: the Codex of Saint Emilianus of the Councils (992), la Bible of Quiso (664), or several copies of the Beatus of Liébana (author from the 8th century), which is what makes it one of the main sources of written works, if not the most notable, of the Spanish Middle Ages. This is the background that gave way to what is now the oldest written expression of the Spanish language:

Visit the towns

Discover the Seven Valleys

This name refers to the high area of the Najerilla River, an area of special scenic beauty where the towns maintain their traditional architecture. It includes the towns of: Viniegra de Arriba, Viniegra de Abajo, Ventrosa, Brieva, Canales de la Sierra, Mansilla and Villavelayo. Its cuisine consists of complete and flavorful dishes, which is to be expected of a high mountain area. In this high area of the Najerilla, ranching has always been the main business activity. Fishing is without question the most popular leisure and sport activity.

Viniegra de Arriba

This is one of the Seven Valleys that has best preserved its popular architecture. It has all the enchantment of the mountain towns of the past, with stone houses and steep cobblestone streets. The transhumant tradition is still preserved in this town: there are ranchers who continue to engage in transhumance and there are marked cattle routes in the town.

Viniegra de Abajo

Called "Lutia" in the Roman period, the discovery of tombs and a Visigothic stele suggest how long ago this town was founded. The footprint of the Spanish-Americans has left its mark on the city. Numerous palatial homes situated at the edge of the road contrast with the ranchers' masonry buildings, which are simpler but have similar beauty. It is located next to the Urbión River, a tributary of the Najerilla that begins in a natural pond on the Mountain of Urbión. The municipality has given it an extensive and ideal area for excursions.

Brieva de Cameros

There are historical records of this town dating as far back as to the 10th century, since a priest from this locality at that time founded an oratory that would be the precursor of the monastery of Valvanera. Brieva took in the patroness of La Rioja during the Ecclesiastical Confiscations of Mendizábal until the opening of the monastery. Ranching and transhumance have impacted the life of this town. This is a place with plenty of scenery. From Brieva, you can see the impressive beauty of the Mountain of Cameros.



Brieva de Cameros.

Monastery of Yuso

The origin of the monastery's construction is reflected in a **legend** that explains how King García of Nájera ordered the transfer of the remains of Saint Emilianus, which were located in Suso, to the monastery of Santa María La Real of Nájera. The oxen that were pulling the wagon stopped in the valley as if the remains of the saint did not want to abandon him, and thus, the monastery of Yuso was built at that site. This is a **Romanesque monastery** from the 10th and 11th centuries, upon which the current monastery of Yuso was built by the Benedictine abbots between the 16th and 18th centuries. It has a combination of styles: mainly Renaissance and Baroque. The Benedictine monks moved to the monastery in the 10th century. One of the most important priors was Dominic, originally from the Riojan town of Cañas, better known as **Saint Dominic of Silos**.

The **façade** of the monastery's entrance was made in 1661, and the relief of Saint Emilianus the "Moor-slayer" appears on it, because according to the tradition, he fought Islam together with James in the Battle of Simancas. The entrance hall was added shortly thereafter in 1689. All of these lead to the **Hall of the Kings**, named after the four large paintings that depict the kings that were the monastery's benefactors.



The lower **cloister** was begun in 1549, and although its vaults are Gothic, the conception is from the Renaissance. The upper one is classicist and contains twenty four paintings by Espinosa and José Vexes, whose depictions are about the life of Saint Emilianus, as written by San Braulioand Arzobispo de Zaragoza.

The **sacristy** is one of the most beautiful in Spain. It is an old chapter house, and it began to be used as such around 1693. The frescoes of the ceiling from the 18th century still maintain all of their original chromatic richness without having been restored. The vestment drawers are made of walnut. Above them, there are twenty four Baroque-style oil paintings on copper of Flemish, Madrid or Italian origin.



Church of San Cristóbal.

Canales de la Sierra

Going across the Najerilla River, its town center is connected by very beautiful small bridges made of stone. North of the town there are remains of an old Roman village, the city of Segeda, which is the original settlement of the town of Canales. The Church of San Cristóbal is the main monument of this town. This is a Romanesque jewel from the 12th century. It consists of only one nave, and a portico with a wooden roof. The porticoed gallery with a Castilian style is the only one like it in all of La Rioja. Inside, it is worth noting its baptismal font from the 12th century.

Mansilla

The only thing remaining from the old town of Mansilla is the Romanesque chapel of Santa Catalina, from the 12th century, because the entire original town was swept under the water of the reservoir in 1960. The new town, which emerged at the same time as the reservoir, is the most unusual in the area, since it is more modern, and as a result, is very different from its neighbors.

Villavelayo

The town center is made up of narrow streets that lead to a small square with a view of the river. This is the town where Saint Aurea, a hermit from the Monastery of Suso, was born and grew-up in the middle of the 11th century, and her biography is narrated in verse by Gonzalo de Berceo in the Poem of Saint Oria.



The ivy bridge.

Ventrosa

This town that has traditional buildings with heraldry is divided into two quarters. You can visit the clock tower in the heights of a crag that overlooks the town and the ethnographic museum that holds more than 2,000 objects. Also of great interest is the ivy bridge on the regional highway just before the Venta de Goyo.



Sacristy of Yuso.

The **church** of the monastery was the first part of this entire complex to be built, beginning in 1504 and completed thirty six years later. It is classified as Late Gothic. The magnificent main altarpiece contains paintings by **Fray Juan Ricci**, from the school of El Greco, that depict Saint Emilianus riding a horse in the Battle of Hacinas and other veneration from this place. The extraordinary **grillwork** by Sebastián de Medina in 1676 completes the artistic collection of the main chapel.

The lower **choir stalls** were made by a Flemish carver around 1640. The grill is also of high quality. It was made in 1676 and closes the lower choir stalls of the church. The rococo style retrochoir contains eight sculptures with the best Spanish imagery, which depict the disciples of Saint Emilianus, with a Plateresque pulpit that is noteworthy for its beauty and decorated with reliefs of the evangelists and symbols of the Passion. The Rood screen, which is behind the lower choir, is supported by a very flat vault with sixteen medallions from the first half of the 17th century. This same area of the church is where one of the monastery's treasures is located: a pulpit made of walnut, which appears to be from the late 16th century.

The monastery's **hymnal shelves** hold twenty five volumes copied between 1729 and 1731. The monastery's archives and library, which are of great value for researchers, are considered to be among the best in Spain. This is the most complete monastic library in Spain. The true value and importance of it lies, not so much in the quantity - more than ten thousand-, but rather in the rare copies that it holds. It is not open to the public, as it is devoted exclusively to research.

The Benedictine monks remained at this place until the Ecclesiastical Confiscations in 1835. Currently, the **Augustinian Recollect Friars** are the ones that keep the monastery's spirit alive.



Dancers of Anguiano

This spectacular dance, declared to be of national interest, is done on 45-centimeter high **wooden stilts** by eight young dancers from the town who, wearing colored vests and yellow skirts, head down the **stone-paved hill**, starting at the church and finishing at the Anguiano square.

Every **22nd of July**, during the Festival of the Magdalena, after mass, the dancers begin this peculiar show in front of the saint's image, accompanied by bagpipe music and a small drum, dancing **"El Agudo"** with their castanets. After going down the six stone steps that separate the church square from the street, one by one, the dancers head down the stone-paved hill **spinning rapidly** until they finish on the "mattress" of people waiting for them at the square. They go back up and then head back down while the image of Saint Mary Magdalene descends on a platform. Once everyone has reached the square, now with sticks, they dance the **"troqueaos"**. The dance is repeated in the afternoon, after the Rosary.

There are written documents about this dance that date back to 1603, although it is believed to have a much older origin. It is the **oldest expression of folk in La Rioja**. The dancers will once again repeat this ritual the **last Saturday of September**, when the image of the Magdalene returns to its chapel to spend the winter there, next to the intermittent water fountain.

Cuisine Days

The cuisine days are a regular event in this area of La Rioja throughout the year and a perfect excuse for visiting this place. They are held in **Matute, Villar de Torre, Pedroso, Baños de Río Tobía, Bobadilla**...

Sport fishing

The waters of the **Najerilla River** are specially suitable for sport fishing, particularly for the prized **trout**. There are many fishing enthusiasts who come to this corner of La Rioja to participate in this sport. To do this, a regional fishing license is required.