



Sunset casts a golden glow over the serene beauty of Puerto de Vega

ASTURIAS: SPAIN'S HOMAGE TO SUSTAINABILITY & MODERN TOURISM

Nestled in northwest Spain, Asturias is redefining what it means to be a modern travel destination. Known as "Green Spain," this picturesque region balances natural beauty with a bold commitment to sustainability and quality. From the rugged peaks of the Picos de Europa to the serene sands of the Cantabrian coastline, Asturias invites visitors to immerse themselves in its contrasts while safeguarding its treasures for generations to come.

"Sustainability isn't just a buzzword here; it's our ethos," says Gimena Llamedo González, Vice President and Councilor for Tourism in Asturias. "Tourism has grown, but so has our responsibility to preserve our natural and cultural heritage. That balance is what makes Asturias unique."

Asturias saw record-breaking numbers in 2023, with 2.7 million tourists and 6.7 million overnight stays. In 2024, the momentum continued with over 2 million visitors during the first eight months. This growth is guided by forward-thinking initiatives such as limiting visitor access to sensitive

GIMENA LLAMEDO GONZÁLEZ

Vice President & Councilor Asturias Tourism



Asturias is small in size but vast in experiences, offering everything from mountain adventures to coastal serenity—all with sustainability at its core.

sites like Picos de Europa National Park and archaeological treasures with prehistoric cave paintings. Shuttle buses have also been introduced to reduce traffic at key attractions, exemplifying the region's commitment to minimizing its environmental footprint.

Asturias provides a unique culinary experience that reflects its diverse landscapes. In the highlands of Cangas de Onís, dishes like wild boar stew showcase the region's hearty, traditional fare. Meanwhile, the coastal village of Salinas offers fresh seafood options such as grilled fish and lobster. In the mountains near Arriondas, chefs are reimagining local ingredients with modern techniques. This contrasts with the simple yet flavorful fried monkfish served in the fishing village of Tazones, where diners can enjoy their meal against the backdrop of a sunset over the Atlantic.

Asturias' reputation as a gastronomic destination extends beyond its seafood. The region is also Spain's cider capital, with

official recognition of Asturian cider culture as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2024. Visitors can join cider-pouring traditions where bottles are held high to aerate the drink as it streams into a glass below. This, paired with Asturias' cheeses such as the intense Cabrales or creamy Afuega'l Pitu, makes for an unforgettable culinary experience.

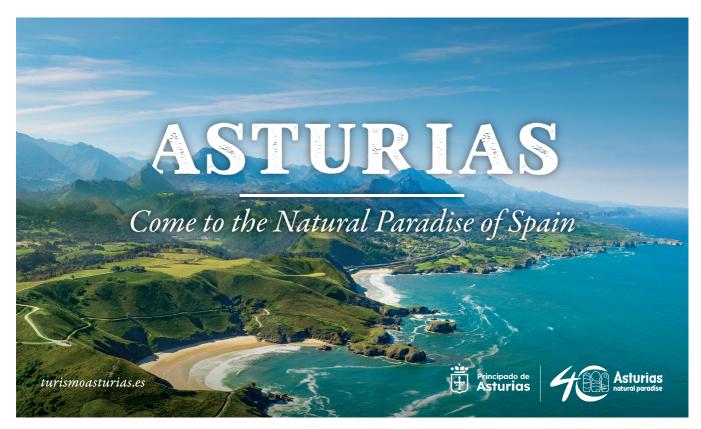
Asturias is currently at the forefront of innovation with a cross-regional ecotourism initiative alongside Galicia, Cantabria and the Basque Country, creating Europe's largest ecotourism corridor. This collaboration features activities like hiking, cycling and sustainable travel along Spain's northern coast. A highlight for outdoor enthusiasts is hiking in the Picos de Europa National Park where dramatic limestone peaks, as well as deep gorges and valleys, offer trails for all skill levels.

Accessibility has also taken a leap forward. The arrival of the high-speed AVE train has transformed travel to the region connecting Asturias to major cities like Madrid and Valladolid. Trains operate at over 90% capacity bringing urbanites to Oviedo's UNESCO-listed pre-Romanesque sites or Gijón's vibrant maritime heritage.

With a focus on sustainability, world-class gastronomy and a vibrant cultural calendar—including the famous Descenso del Sella canoeing race—the region has positioned itself as a leader in modern tourism. As Adrián Barbón Rodríguez, President of the Principality of Asturias, states: "Asturias is a place where those who come, always return." •



Experiencing the Splendor of Alto de la Tornería







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We are not pursuing mass tourism but a high-quality experience rooted in nature culture & gastronomy.

ASTURIAS: A NATURAL PARADISE POISED FOR GROWTH

What is the tourism potential for the region?

Tourism in Asturias thrives on its well-preserved natural landscapes and coastline. With 94% of our shoreline remaining untouched by large-scale development, we boast one of Europe's best-preserved coasts. This natural appeal, combined with a mild climate amid global climate change, positions us as a refuge for visitors seeking authentic, sustainable experiences.

In 2023 the region set new tourism records, continuing growth seen since 2022. Tourism now contributes 12–13% to Asturias' GDP, with gastronomy playing a vital role. The region's "land-scape cuisine" highlights local products, such as meats from native breeds, enhancing its unique culinary appeal.

Looking ahead we will continue to focus on sustainable high-quality tourism that avoids mass-market trends. We aim to attract visitors interested in nature, heritage, culture and gastronomy, ensuring compatibility with local life.

What potential do German-speaking tourists represent?

German, Austrian and Swiss tourists are increasingly discovering Asturias and northern "Green Spain," shifting away from

ADRIÁN BARBÓN RODRÍGUEZ

President, Principality of Asturias

traditional destinations like Levante. Once they visit they tend to return. In the first half of this year foreign tourism grew by 10–12%, much of it outside the summer season, reflecting a broader appeal. Improved connectivity has also been key, with Asturias Airport offering a record 29 routes and passenger numbers at an all-time high. Additionally, the high-speed rail now links Asturias to Madrid in just three hours making travel seamless for those flying into Madrid.

What are the region's key strengths?

Asturias excels in renewable energy and sustainable agriculture, driving economic growth. Historically an energy producer through thermal power we are now transitioning to green energy. Former thermal plants are being repurposed for projects like hydrogen valleys, focusing on green hydrogen, while wind energy production remains a strong suit. Companies such as Windar in Avilés lead in manufacturing onshore and offshore wind components. Photovoltaic plants are also emerging, with firms like Asturiana de Zinc planning large-scale solar projects for self-sufficient energy.

In agriculture we are prioritizing sustainability and quality through our extensive livestock farming model. Family-run farms rear animals in open pastures, particularly during summer, allowing them to graze freely resulting in superior meat quality. The focus on native breeds further enhances the region's distinctiveness. Together, these initiatives in renewable energy and sustainable farming underline our commitment to innovation and environmental stewardship positioning us as a leader in green transformation.

How do you develop sustainable agriculture & rural tourism?

We are leveraging our native breeds and agricultural traditions to drive sustainable development. The region promotes seven native breeds, including the Pita Pinta hen and the Gochu Asturcelta pig, valued for their unique qualities such as healthier fat content. Efforts to revive traditional markets, branded as "Mercados del Paraíso," focus on eco-friendly local products that reflect Asturias' identity as a natural paradise.



Where industry meets nature: Ría de Avilés



Rural tourism, deeply connected to agriculture, plays a significant role. Initiated in 1986 under President Pedro de Silva, Asturias pioneered the concept of integrating small accommodations into rural settings aligning tourism with natural and cultural conservation. Today rural tourism accounts for 43% of the region's capacity making it a leader in the sector. The Rectoral de Taramundi, the first national rural tourism establishment, exemplifies this approach. Operating for nearly 40 years, it celebrates traditions like water-powered crafts and blacksmithing, illustrating how rural tourism can preserve heritage while supporting local economies. These integrated strategies highlight our commitment to sustainable growth through agriculture, local markets and tourism.

How are you addressing depopulation?

Despite earlier forecasts of a population decline, we have actually seen growth, staying above one million residents. Several factors are contributing to this trend, which include our attractive climate and high quality of life, supported by top-tier public services. We offer free early child-hood education (ages 0-3) and an extensive healthcare system, including local clinics and renowned hospitals.

We also provide tax incentives for families such as deductions for children, which have benefited over 100,000 residents. These policies, along with support for businesses, make up the "Asturian fiscal strategy," designed to combat de-

population, promote employment and strengthen communities.

How do you attract investment?

We are becoming a hub for technological innovation and industrial transformation, especially in decarbonization projects worth around €3 billion. The region's support for companies includes access to European funds, such as the Just Transition Fund due to its commitment to a sustainable transition.

Since 2019 the number of R&D centers has grown from 2 to 16, making us the 4th Spanish region with the highest percentage of tech jobs. We have also seen a net increase of 18,000 workers,

highlighting growth in our active labor force.

We are also a leader in shipbuilding, with 75% of Spain's orders coming from our shipyards. The agri-food sector is another key area, with companies like Central Lechera and Reny Picot transforming milk into high-quality products. Additionally, industries such as paper and cellulose are undergoing significant transformation with Ence leading projects in the Navia basin.

What support & incentives are being considered to attract investment?

We offer fiscal incentives like tax deductions to encourage entrepreneurship. Additionally, businesses starting in rural areas can receive non-repayable grants up to €50,000 through European LEAD-ER groups, supporting activities from engineering offices to retail stores. These initiatives aim to foster business growth and attract investment.

What is your vision for the future?

Looking ahead I envision Asturias as a leading region in Spain. With its strong industrial foundation (20.5% of our GDP comes from industry), growing technological sectors, and commitment to preserving culture, traditions, natural landscapes and unique cuisine, the future is bright. We just need to believe in ourselves more. As José Andrés, the renowned chef from Asturias, says, "Asturias just needs to believe in itself."•

Amar Hernández - Arrontes & Barrera



Asturias: Renowned for its Agricultural Exports & Gastronomy





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Asturias offers a variety of experiences: skiing in the mountains in the morning & relaxing on the Cantabrian coastline by afternoon.

ASTURIAS: A RISING STAR IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Can you provide a tourism overview?

Tourism has thrived in recent years, driven by a post-pandemic shift toward sustainable and nature-focused destinations. Renowned for Spain's most pristine coastline, unique beaches, dramatic cliffs and biosphere reserves, Asturias perfectly aligns with this demand. In 2023, we welcomed a record 2.7 million tourists and 6.7 million overnight stays, solidifying our reputation as a premier nature-focused destination.

We are very committed to sustainable tourism, recognizing its value to local economies, especially in rural areas with small, family-run accommodations. Efforts to extend tourism beyond peak seasons are paying off, with a 5% increase in visitors from January to May 2024, and moderate growth during the summer. In the first eight months of 2024 we welcomed 2 million tourists, suggesting another record-breaking year.

Key initiatives include redistributing tourist flows to lesser-known areas, such as those with industrial and mining heritage. International tourism is now growing rapidly, up 35% last

GIMENA LLAMEDO GONZÁLEZ

Vice President & Councilor Presidency, Demographic Challenge Equality & Tourism, Asturias

year, driven by improved air connectivity and targeted marketing in key markets. Because of this, sustainability and quality remain central to our tourism strategy, ensuring the preservation of natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

How has the high-speed train (AVE) helped boost tourism?

The arrival of the AVE has been a game-changer for us, exceeding even the most optimistic expectations. High-speed trains now operate at over 90% capacity, with strong demand despite increased frequencies. This surge in popularity reflects Asturias' appeal, driven by its focus on sustainability, quality and a tranquil atmosphere.

Tourism growth is especially noticeable in Oviedo, the region's top destination, with a 5% increase in visitors from Madrid. There has also been a rise in visitors from Valladolid, directly tied to the high-speed rail connection. We are increasingly regarded as a sought-after refuge, and the region is well-positioned to leverage the success of the AVE, further cementing its status as a key destination.





A Haven for Wildlife: Fuentes del Narcea

How to you cater to German-speaking visitors?

Germany has become a key market for us, leading as the top source of international tourists. In 2023, 67,000 German visitors chose the region. While Germans traditionally favored sun-and-beach destinations, trends now show a growing preference for sustainability and quality. The region's natural beauty and active tourism options, such as hiking and cycling, are especially appealing. Asturias is a cyclist's paradise, leveraging major events like La Vuelta a España to highlight its stunning land-scapes. Iconic climbs like Lagos de Covadonga, Angliru, and Gamoniteiro attract cycling enthusiasts, while hiking trails further appeal to nature lovers.



Picu Urriellu: The Heart of Picos de Europa National Park

We also offer a unique urban trio—Oviedo, Gijón, and Avilés—each with its own distinct charm. Oviedo is known for its UNESCO World Heritage preromanesque sites, the Museum of Fine Arts, and its role in the Camino de Santiago. Gijón, with its beach and maritime heritage, boasts a rich Roman history. Avilés, a hidden gem, features the Niemeyer Center and an impressive historic quarter.

Asturias offers a variety of experiences: skiing in the mountains in the morning and relaxing on the Cantabrian coastline by afternoon, sampling fresh seafood or hiking in the Picos de Europa. The region blends outdoor adventure with rich cultural and historical attractions, leaving a lasting impression on visitors, many of whom return. The challenge now is to ensure more people discover all it has to offer.

Can you highlight any new initiatives?

We are committed to sustainability and quality in tourism. We have been introducing shuttle buses to reduce traffic at key tourist sites. Additionally, strict access plans for Picos de Europa National Park limit entry to 3,000 visitors daily during the peak season. Access to archaeological sites, like cave paintings, is also carefully regulated.

Annual events like the Princess of Asturias Awards, La Vuelta a España, and the internationally recognized Descenso del Sella, a canoeing race held every August, showcase the region's cultural and sporting significance. The Sella race, in particular is a major highlight, drawing participants worldwide. It's an emotional live-broadcast event with locals and visitors singing "Asturias, Patria Querida" as

the canoes line up. Tourists can even join in the race, experiencing the excitement firsthand.

How do you boost sustainable tourism?

We are currently teaming up with the Basque Country, Cantabria and Galicia to create Europe's largest ecotourism corridor, supported by European funding. This initiative will offer outdoor activities like hiking, cycling and nature-focused experiences, catering to travelers seeking sustainable tourism. We may be small in size but we offer a wide range of accessible activities. Whether visitors are seeking adventure or tranquility, the region delivers on its promise as a premium destination.

What is your vision for the future?

I'm proud when visitors fall in love with our region as our residents share a strong sense of belonging. With that in mind my goal is to ensure that tourism grows responsibly, benefiting rural areas and redistributing income. I also hope that Asturias remains a natural paradise, preserving its unique qualities. We're currently working on updating the Tourism Law to regulate tourist rentals, which is a key issue for us. We want growth that benefits locals, and last year we were honored as the most welcoming region in Spain by Booking.com. In 2024, we also celebrated the official recognition of Asturian cider culture as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. This is a testament to our rich traditions and cultural pride. It's vital that we continue to believe in our potential and build on our strengths.



FACES OF CHANGE

The Leaders Making a Difference in Asturias



ALFREDO CANTELI Mayor, Oviedo

How is Oviedo positioning itself as a hub for tourism, culture & economic development?

Oviedo is a city that balances tradition and progress. As Spain's Gastronomic Capital for 2024, we've showcased our exceptional cuisine, which ranges from affordable local dishes to high-end dining. This recognition reflects our vibrant culinary scene, a key draw for visitors. We also celebrate our cultural heritage, with treasures like the pre-Romanesque sites and the Museum of Fine Arts, which is undergoing an expansion to solidify its place among the nation's best. Our streets, filled with sculptures and history, make the city feel like an open-air museum. Accessibility has been a focus, with the highspeed train and new flight connections bringing us closer to visitors from around the world. On the economic front, we're transforming spaces like the old arms factory into hubs for technology and defense industries, creating jobs and innovation. Oviedo is a welcoming, clean and safe city that blends history with modernity, ensuring it remains a place of growth and opportunity for all.





MARIVÍ MONTESERÍN Mayor, Avilés

How has Avilés balanced innovation, sustainability & inclusivity?

Avilés has embraced change without losing sight of its heritage. Our journey began decades ago, recognizing the need to evolve from heavy industry to a knowledge-driven economy. Innovation has been key, with R&D centers and initiatives like the Talent Hub fostering collaboration between education and industry. Sustainability has guided every step, from modernizing the port to demanding high standards from businesses. Inclusivity drives our urban planning, creating green, livable spaces and ensuring everyone is within minutes of a park. We've also restored historical landmarks and preserved the charm of our old town, which attracts both residents and visitors. Culture is central, with venues like the Niemeyer Center and Teatro Palacio Valdés drawing international acclaim. Our goal is to create a city that's modern, welcoming and resilient, where tradition and progress coexist seamlessly. This vision has ensured that Avilés remains true to its identity while building a sustainable future.





ALFREDO GARCÍA QUINTANA

Councilor for Tourism, Oviedo

How has Oviedo transformed from a lesser-known destination to a thriving center for tourism?

Oviedo's transformation is rooted in redefining what makes a city attractive. Without beaches, we've embraced our strengths. As the "Origin of the Camino," we highlight our unique connection to the Camino de Santiago, tracing the journey of Alfonso II the Chaste. Our pre-Romanesque architecture, the Cathedral's Holy Chamber, and the Museum of Fine Arts showcase our rich cultural heritage. We've also leaned into gastronomy, earning recognition as Spain's Gastronomic Capital for 2024. Visitors discover our exceptional dishes like Fabada and Cachopo, paired with world-class cider. Strategically positioned at the heart of Asturias, Oviedo is a gateway to the region's natural paradise, linking mountains, coast and rural beauty. Cultural events, from our opera season to the Princess of Asturias Awards, further elevate our profile. By focusing on pilgrimage, cultural and gastronomic tourism, we've created a distinctive identity that keeps visitors coming back.





DAVID GONZÁLEZ
President, Sekuens
Investment Board

How is Asturias leveraging its industrial heritage to attract investment?

Asturias has always been defined by its industrial roots, and we're using that foundation to drive innovation and transformation. Our focus is on modernizing traditional sectors like steel and engineering while developing industries in hydrogen, defense, space, and new food technologies. These efforts are grounded in our unique strengths: robust infrastructure, abundant water resources, and a skilled workforce. We're also fostering collaboration between academia, businesses, and public administration to ensure innovation is actionable and sustainable. Attracting foreign investment is key, and we target regions like Germany and Austria, where engineering excellence aligns with our capabilities. Beyond the numbers, we emphasize quality of life—Asturias offers safety, access to healthcare, and a balance between natural beauty and modernity. Our goal is clear: to create a resilient economy that not only sustains industries but also inspires future generations to see Asturias as a hub for opportunity and growth.





PHILIPPE MEYAN CEO, ArcelorMittal Asturias

How is ArcelorMittal balancing its industrial role in a region known as a natural paradise?

At ArcelorMittal Asturias, we're focused on transforming our industry while respecting the environment around us. Sustainability isn't just an obligation; it's a responsibility we embrace as part of this region. Our electric furnace, set to launch in 2026, represents Europe's first decarbonization project for long steel products. It will have zero carbon emissions and recycle scrap metal, making our processes circular and cleaner. Beyond that, we're investing in hydrogen production, an area where Spain, and particularly Asturias, has incredible potential. We're also improving water recycling and air quality while ensuring emissions are minimized. These initiatives align with Asturias' identity as a natural paradise. At the same time, we maintain strong ties with the local community, employing thousands and contributing significantly to the regional economy. By embracing innovation and collaboration, we aim to prove that industry and nature can coexist, setting a benchmark for sustainable steel production.





SANTIAGO RODRIGUEZ VEGA President, Avilés Port Authority

How has the Port of Avilés adapted to meet modern industrial needs?

The Port of Avilés has always evolved to meet the demands of its time. Once a cornerstone of Asturias' industrial boom, we've transitioned to support emerging sectors like wind energy. Over the past 15 years, we've developed new docks and logistics spaces to accommodate the production and shipping of components for onshore and offshore wind towers, a growing global industry. Sustainability is central to our strategy. We've invested in reducing emissions, improving water quality and expanding solar energy use. Recycling initiatives and rainwater collection systems ensure efficient resource management. Our commitment to the community is unwavering, providing infrastructure that supports local industries and employment. The port is not just a transit point but a partner in Asturias' economic and environmental future. By balancing innovation with tradition we remain a vital force for the region and ready to adapt to the challenges ahead.







GRAN HOTEL LAS CALDAS: A VISION OF WELLNESS AND LUXURY

Could you tell us about the history & evolution of Las Caldas?

Las Caldas has a long history, being the oldest spa in Spain and established in 1776 by Ventura Rodríguez. Initially a modest spa and hotel, it grew significantly in the 19th century to accommodate increasing demand from the bourgeoisie of Oviedo and Asturias. By 1896, the property boasted the beautiful Salón de los Espejos, which remains a preserved jewel of our complex. After a decline and closure in 2003 we undertook a comprehensive renovation, reopening in 2008 with a modern wellness philosophy. Today, the property features two hotels—a five-star and a four-star—a convention center, a spa and a wellness clinic.

How are technology & sustainability integrated into your services?

One of our key technological advancements is eliminating paper in guest services. Instead of traditional brochures or catalogs, each room is equipped with a tablet providing comprehensive information about the complex, schedules, rates and booking options. Guests can also access a corporate TV channel for updates and easily communicate with staff digitally. On the sustainability front, our most valuable resource is thermal spring water, naturally emitted at 40°C. This water heats the complex, including pools, air conditioning and sanitation systems, reducing our reliance on gas and electricity. We

FERNANDO SÁNCHEZ

General Manager Gran Hotel Las Caldas by Blau Hotels



Just ten minutes from the city center, we are in a completely natural environment that seems almost frozen in time.

also minimize plastic use, favoring glass dispensers and offering only natural, chemical-free cosmetics in our treatments.

What draws international guests to Las Caldas & how do you meet their diverse needs?

International visitors, particularly from Germany, Switzerland and Austria, are often drawn by our emphasis on gastronomy and health. Asturias' culinary heritage is a major attraction and our organic garden ensures fresh, high-quality produce for our restaurant. Additionally, our wellness programs, such as detox, weight loss and anti-smoking initiatives, offer guests the opportunity to adopt healthier lifestyles. These programs are supported by a professional team, including doctors, nutritionists and Chinese medicine specialists, providing a holistic approach to health.

What is your vision for the future of Las Caldas?

My vision is to position Las Caldas as a leader in health, wellness and sports tourism. We are working diligently to become a benchmark for excellence in this sector, leveraging our exceptional facilities, unique natural environment and dedicated team. Asturias presents certain challenges, particularly in transportation and connectivity, but improvements in these areas are helping us attract more clients. The region's combination of cultural richness, natural beauty and accessibility to the mountains and beaches within a 30-minute radius makes it an incredible destination. Ultimately, we want to leave a legacy of providing transformative and unforgettable experiences for our guests while maintaining our commitment to sustainability and innovation.



GRAN HOTEL LAS CALDAS: A TRANQUIL ESCAPE IN THE HEART OF ASTURIAS

Nestled in Asturias, Spain, the Gran Hotel Las Caldas by Blau Hotels stands as a testament to the seamless blend of historical grandeur and contemporary luxury. Established in 1776, this five-star retreat has evolved into a premier wellness destination, attracting travelers seeking both relaxation and rejuvenation.

The hotel's architecture reflects its rich heritage, with structures spanning the 18th to 21st centuries. Following a comprehensive renovation in 2008 Las Caldas reopened its doors, offering 79 elegantly designed rooms that harmoniously com-

bine Victorian charm with modern amenities.

Central to the hotel's appeal is its expansive wellness complex, Las Caldas Villa Termal. Spanning 40,000 square meters, it encompasses two thermal centers—Aquaxana and the Royal Spa—alongside a specialized Wellness & Beauty area and a sports center. Here, guests can indulge in mineral-rich thermal waters, renowned for their therapeutic properties, within facilities reminiscent of Roman baths.

The hotel also caters to sports enthusiasts with state-of-the-art facilities and proximity to numerous cycling and running routes that traverse the Asturian countryside. The hotel's commitment to health is further exemplified by the Las Caldas Clinic, which provides advanced medical services, including nutrition consultations and physical therapy.

Culinary excellence is another hallmark of the Gran Hotel. The on-site Viator Restaurant offers a menu that celebrates local Asturian produce, much of which is sourced from the hotel's organic garden.



Rejuvenation & luxury collide at Gran Hotel Las Caldas

In essence, the Gran Hotel Las Caldas offers a sanctuary where history, luxury and wellness converge. Its unparalleled facilities, combined with the natural beauty of Asturias, make it a destination of choice for discerning travelers seeking a holistic retreat.



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