

After passing through Polaciones and the La Cohilla Reservoir, the **Nansa River** runs through the municipality of Tudanca. This municipality is **tucked away** by the **Estrecho de Peña Bejo** (also known as Caos de Bejo), but opens up when you get a bit further down. Within the territory of Tudanca are the villages: **La Lastra, Santotis, Sarceda and Tudanca**.

It's a municipality where you can find a nice mix of well-preserved **traditions, hiking trails, literature and architecture**. Doesn't that sound wonderful?

Let's start with its **name: Tudanca**. If you spend a few days in the region, you'll see some **slim, greyish-black** (they're sometimes brown, as well) cows grazing. They are **Tudanca cows**, a **native breed** of Cantabria. This breed is adapted to **mountain areas** where they regularly graze from May to October. In the past, they were used for **working** on the fields, but nowadays, their **beef** is a valuable resource in the area's cuisine. An interesting thing about Tudanca cows is that they're born a **reddish-brown** color and as they **grow**, they turn **grey and black**. Their **snout** and the **area around the eyes** are white and they have large, curved, white **horns** with a black tip. The **males** are **black** and have a **white stripe** that goes along their back. **José María de Cossío**, who we'll talk more about later, once said they were "**strong, agile, calm and resilient**" cows; we'd also add that they're peaceful and very intelligent.

Tudanca was a passage on **historic routes** that connected the coast and the meseta, like **El Potro Trail** and the **Camino Real**. It might be a challenge getting to know the area **on foot**, and judging by the mountains that surround us, you can imagine **it won't be an easy task!**

However, if you prefer something more relaxing with less effort, a walk through town and a visit to the Tudanca House is the perfect plan, too.

Now, we'll **reveal** more details about the **ESSENTIAL** places you need to **EXPLORE**, and interesting facts that will make your visit more fun.



## ESSENTIALS

### ① THE VILLAGE OF TUDANCA

Did you know that **Unamuno and Alberti**, among other prominent people, walked though the streets of this village? Keep reading and you'll find out why.


In 1983, Tudanca was declared part of the Historic-Artistic Grouping due to its excellent preservation of its traditional '**montañes**' **architecture**. The streets have a mix of **large 18<sup>th</sup> century houses** belonging to those who emigrated to America, and more modest houses lined in **rows** which adapt to the steepness of the terrain. It's a must-see sight in the Saja Nansa region.



Pay **attention** to some small **round structures** on the second-story of some of the houses: they're old ovens where **cornbread**—among other things—was made; the bread is called "**borona**."

## 2 SANTOTIS LOOKOUT POINT


On the **CA – 281** road, right next to the bus stop, is the **Santotis lookout**. From here you can see almost all of Tudanca, except Sarceda, which is hidden about 4 kilometers north. You can see the villages of **Tudanca** and **La Lastra**, the **Estrecho de Bejo**, **Prao Concejo** and the hills of **El Haya** and **La Avellanosa**. **It's a place with STUNNING views!**


 Next to **La Avellanosa hill** there's a lot of **peat**, an accumulation of organic matter that was formed thousands of years ago from decayed vegetation. **Peat captures a lot of CO2**, therefore, it's essential in the **fight against climate change**.

 At the lookout point, there's a **panel** with information about the municipality.

## 3 CASONA DE TUDANCA (THE GREAT TUDANCA HOUSE)

Visiting **la Casona** gives you the opportunity to see what an **18<sup>th</sup> century house** was like. It was built on the orders of an emigrant who went to Peru; and one of its owners was **José María de Cossío**, philologist, essayist, author of the bull-fighting encyclopedia *El Cossío* and **member of the Spanish Royal Academy**. He had a close **relationship** with **writers from the Generation of '27**, bullfighters and footballers. Many people visited la Casona and left their mark, including **José María de Pereda**, **Carlos Gardel**, **Unamuno** and **Alberti**. They considered it to be **"a refuge of Spanish culture among the mountains."** Tudanca even appears in literary works like Pereda's *Peñas Arriba*, in which it has the fictitious name of **Tablanca**.

 Inside, there's a library of **25,000 books**, French engravings, **manuscripts by Alberti and Cela**, drawings and **paintings** by **Zuloaga** and **Solana**, the house's original **furniture**, and even a **chapel** and altarpiece. It's truly an amazing place that you can see on a **guided tour!**

 For more information and visiting hours, click on [\*\*la Casona de Tudanca\*\*](#)

## 4 PRAO CONCEJO

Tudanca has been closely linked to **livestock**. Atop the mountain where Tudanca is located, you'll find **Prao Concejo**, which has been a **communal meadow** since ancient times. For its use and maintenance, it's divided into **8 areas**, which are in turn **divided up into smaller areas**. They are then allotted to residents to **use for harvesting**. In the **spring** it's used for grazing or as what is commonly said, it's **gathered "a diente"** (or in other words, **"by mouth"** by the cattle). Unamuno defined it as **"a model of collective agrarian use"** and this is how it's reflected in his writings.



Some **typical harvesting expressions** in Tudanca are:

- **hacer mueldas y morujos** (long rows of piles of dried grass and small piles respectively)
- **picar el dalle** (to hammer the scyth used to cut the grass)
- **velortos** (long flexible sticks made of hazel wood that are tied together to make rope)
- **podrellos** (rope made of braided 'velortos' used to tie the grass to the 'basna')
- **hacer hacinas** (to make big piles of dried grass secured with a stick in the middle)
- **lumbillar** (to pile dried grass in long rows)
- **atropar** (to gather the dried grass with a rake)
- **bocarón** (opening in a stable where the dried grass is inserted and stored)
- **basna** (small cart without wheels used to pull the dried, cut grass)

If you'd like to know more about these harvest terms, you can ask around in Tudanca!

## 5 INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE

The waters of the **Nansa River** have been used to **move mills**, make the **iron foundry** run, and to move turbines to **produce electricity** in the **20<sup>th</sup> century**. It's one of the rivers that has been **most modified by the hand of man** with the construction of **reservoirs, diversion dams** and **falls** like the one in **La Lastra** which started to function in **1947**. If you go up **towards Polaciones**, a little above La Lastra, you'll see a large pipe that passes over the road. It's a **penstock** that takes water from the **La Cohilla reservoir** to make it fall **hard and move** the turbine to produce electricity. The excess water falls into the counter-reservoir of the La Lastra plant. This **means of electricity production** is called a **fall**.




There's a **House - Management** building next to the road. It was the housing, warehouses and offices of the company that built it, **Salto del Nansa**.




If you'd like to learn more about hydraulic falls and hydroelectric power plants click here: [hydroelectric falls and power plants](#)

## 6 ESTRECHO DE PEÑA BEJO

The **road that goes from Tudanca to Polaciones** winds its way up through the **Estrecho de Peña Bejo** (also known as Caos de Bejo), a rock that the Nansa River excavated looking for its outlet to the sea. Its **walls** are a hidden gem from a **geological standpoint**. In them, you can see **the best set of geological matter in Cantabria** from the **Triassic period 250 million years ago**.

 It's a **scenic route** on which you can enjoy some impressive sights. At the top of **La Cohilla Reservoir** you can stop and take in the beauty of this natural canyon.

 There's some very interesting information at the following link: [Triassic matter](#)



In Tudanca, we suggest you follow the routes that were used for centuries to connect the coast and the meseta. They do, however, require some physical fitness due to their incline. The first one, El Potro Trail, has the description starting from Polaciones to Tudanca, so you'll have to read it starting from the end!

## 1 EL POTRO TRAIL

This trail is part of the **route that connected the coast with the Castilian meseta**. There are **several alternatives** depending on the place you choose to start from. We recommend **connecting the municipalities of Polaciones and Tudanca** by starting in **Pejanda** and finishing in **Tudanca**, or **viceversa**. It's a **linear route** and given its length and incline, we recommend taking two cars and leaving one at each point.

From **Pejanda**, follow the road to **Callecedo**, where you take the **path** that goes to the **left** towards Peña Sagra. You'll **climb uphill for 6 kilometers** until you reach **El Potro lookout point** where your mouth will probably drop once you see the **amazing panoramic views** of **La Cohilla Reservoir**, **Tudanca** and mountains like **La Concilla**, **Peña Labra** and **Tres Mares Peak**. The trail then goes downhill to a junction called **Collado de Abeyán** (it's also known as "Joza Abellán" or "Jozalabellán"). It forks into two paths that lead to San Sebastián de Garabadal and La Lastra. To continue the trail, take the path to **La Lastra** and from there, **Tudanca**.



Technical information and recommendations:

- ▶ **Starts and ends:** Pejanda - Tudanca
- ▶ **Length:** 14 km
- ▶ **Duration:** 5h
- ▶ **Level:** moderate
- ▶ **Type of track:** linear
- ▶ **Desnivel:** It depends on the starting point. Consult the track
- ▶ **Type of path:** road and path
- ▶ **Signpost:** partial
- ▶ **Drinking water:** a fountain in Tudanca



Notes:

1. We recommend downloading the track of the route on your phone and check the weather forecast beforehand.
2. Wear good hiking shoes and take a walking stick.
3. Only leave your footprints on the ground: throw any trash you accumulate into the correct bin when you return.
4. Live in harmony with the environment: observe animals from a distance and respect the plants. If you walk quietly you may find some pleasant surprises.



[Download more information and track of the route HERE](#)

## 2 CAMINO REAL TUDANCA – PUENTE PUMAR

This trail follows the route of the **Camino Real**, which connected **San Vicente de la Barquera** with **Medina de Rioseco and Toledo**. It requires you to be physically fit due to the steepness of the terrain. The route **starts in Tudanca** so you should leave your car in the parking lot at the entrance of the town. You go up to the highest part of the village and then, to the right if you're facing south, you'll take a concrete path. This will take you to the **Santuco de Hoz** where the trail starts to go downhill. The 'santucos' are small shrines with religious imagery that are set along the main roads. They were a way to protect the walkers' souls.

You'll come across a fork in the road with a concrete path that leads to the **Las Nieves hermitage**. If you want you can go see it and return to the fork. However, at the fork in the road, take the path to the right which is a trail that will lead you to the **Sobayo cabins**. These structures are quite common in cattle areas, as they're a refuge for the livestock during the cold winters.

Once you pass the cabins, leave the path and start to follow the trail next to the ravine. After crossing the river, you'll see a path with large stone slabs. Continue through **El Haya hill** until you reach **Collado de Pantrieme**. From this point on you'll go downhill until you reach **Puente Pumar**.



Technical information and recommendations:

- ▶ **Starts and ends:** Tudanca - Puente Pumar
- ▶ **Length:** 9,50 km
- ▶ **Duration:** 4h
- ▶ **Level:** moderate
- ▶ **Type of track:** linear
- ▶ **Desnivel:** It depends on the starting point. Consult the track

- ▶ **Type of path:** road and path
- ▶ **Signpost:** partial
- ▶ **Drinking water:** a fountain in Tudanca



Notes:

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