

Covadonga

Covadonga is where the Spanish Christian army first held fast against the Moors. It had great symbolic significance in the Christian reconquest of Spain. Nevermind the fact that the battle took place sometime between 718 and 725 and it took them another seven and a half centuries to finally kick the Moors out, the Spanish lavish commemoration on the site -including setting it aside in 1918 as one of country's first national parks. The park has been expanded to now include 230,000 acres -almost the entire western massif of the Picos de Europa- making it the largest national park in Europe. The village attracts many tourists. Legend says that a cave near Covadonga was the refuge of King Pelayo. The cave's chapel dates from the 8th cent.

History's swell, but the real glory of Covadonga is the land. Covadonga is in the Picos de Europa, a limestone mountain range along Spain's north Atlantic coast. The Picos get first dibs on the moisture laden clouds coming in from the ocean, and are moist and misty all year long. Glacial activity, and the effects of constant precipitation, have carved drama into the mountains - cirques, sinkholes, alpine lakes, columns, and underneath the surface, networks of caverns. Many caves and caverns feature prehistoric paintings. Among spelunkers-in-the-know, the Picos are fabled.

