The Pyrenean enclave of Orreaga/Roncesvalles, near the border with France, is a milestone on the Pilgrims’ Way to Compostela and a centre of Marian popular pilgrimages. In the complex of buildings that make up Orreaga/Roncesvalles, the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria (5) stands out. The church was built at the end of the 12th century and in the early 13th century with limestone from Oriz-Betelu. Its design is French Gothic. There are three naves on the ground floor, the central nave being twice the width of the others. Its roof has cross vaults and a pentagonal sanctuary. This sanctuary has large Gothic windows with modern stained glass. On the left-hand side of the facade, there is a tower that still bears its original defensive appearance. Inside the church, the image of Santa Maria de Roncesvalles presides over the high altar. This is a beautiful Gothic wood carving, and it is covered with silver and gold trimmings.

The old 12th-century Romanesque cloister collapsed in 1640 as a result of the weight of snow that had piled up, and was rebuilt in 1715. The chapel of San Agustín (6) stands on a crypt covered with slabs of stone on the outside. This is an old Gothic chapter church that holds the tombs of King Sancho VII el Fuerte and Alfonso VIII. Next to the cloister of the Collegiate Church is the Prior’s residence, constructed in the 19th century. Inside are the rooms of the Chapter of Roncesvalles presided over by the ‘casa Itzandegia’. This is an old Gothic structure, and it was built down on the plain, together with the collegiate church of Roncesvalles.

New buildings were constructed during the Middle Ages and the collegiate church became very important, due to its extensive land and the growing number of pilgrims. From the 17th century onwards, Orreaga/Roncesvalles suffered a decline at the same time as the Pilgrims’ Way to Santiago, and its property diminished. In 1831 the Chapter was reformed, whereby the Augustinians gave way to a Franciscan order. The old 12th-century Romanesque cloister collapsed in 1600 as a result of the weight of snow that had piled up, and was rebuilt in 1715. The chapel of San Agustín (6) stands on a crypt covered with slabs of stone on the outside. This is an old Gothic chapter church that holds the tombs of King Sancho VII el Fuerte and Alfonso VIII. Next to the cloister of the Collegiate Church is the Prior’s residence, constructed in the 19th century. Inside are the rooms of the Chapter of Roncesvalles presided over by the ‘casa Itzandegia’. This is an old Gothic structure, and it was built down on the plain, together with the collegiate church of Roncesvalles.

Orreaga/Roncesvalles has always been a place of transit. The Celts entered the Iberian Peninsula via this route, as did those who later used the Roman Way linking Roncesvalles and Astorga. In 777 the dress of the battle of Roncesvalles was fought, in which the advance of Charlemagne’s army (commanded by Roland and the highest-ranking French nobles) was defeated by the Visigoths.

Another major historical event took place in the following century. In 833, the tomb of the Apostle St. James (Santiago) was found in Galicia and pilgrims to Compostela began soon after from all over Christianity. One of the Pilgrims’ Routes (and the one which became the best known) is the so-called ‘Camino de Santiago’. It is a 770-mile route with a further 300 miles, forming the Pilgrimage of Roncesvalles, in which the advance of Charlemagne’s army (commanded by Roland and the highest-ranking French nobles) was defeated by the Visigoths.

The Battle of Roncesvalles took place on 15th August 778. There is only one certain fact. Charlemagne’s army was attacked and conquered by the Visigoths (Basques) on its way back after an expedition beyond its kingdom’s borders. The attackers were either people from Pamplona seeking vengeance for the destruction of their city walls, or Visigoths from the other side of the Pyrenees who repulsed Frankish power. The battle was fought in the area of Roncesvalles, where the road leading to Compostela was the most important road in Europe for moving migrating birds; the historical remains of times of war, such as the P Line or the Wellington Route, and of course the battle routes in the Navarrese Pyrenees you may choose, with a mountain bike, gravel, e-bike, etc.

The Museum—Library which dates from the end of the 19th century, has the library on the first floor. Open only to specialists. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest. The museum, located on the ground floor, holds pieces of great interest.