


It's Rugged. It's Pristine. It's Europe.

ISLAS CÍES, SPAIN

 The beauty of these three islands off Spain's rugged northwestern coast lies in their contrasts. Look east toward the Galician port town of Vigo, and it's all placid turquoise water. Face west, and the heavy surf of the Atlantic crashes against soaring granite cliffs. So impressed were the ancient Romans that they dubbed them "the islands of the gods."

In 2002, Spain incorporated the islands into the Galician Atlantic Islands National Park, abolishing all

future development. No more than 2,200 people a day are permitted. Cars and bicycles are forbidden and the facilities are spare — three restaurants, a clinic, and a market. If you want to overnight, plan to camp. Between May and October, a 40-minute ferry operates from Vigo, Baiona, and Cangas. Upon disembarking, most visitors head to Praia de Rodas, a narrow stretch of beach that links two of the islands. Flop onto the powdery sand and it's easy to see why the Spanish call this the "Galician Caribbean" — though a plunge in the water, which seldom exceeds 65 degrees, says otherwise. So will the island's network of hiking trails, which wind uphill through forests of pine, sycamore, and holly, passing through pre-Roman ruins along the way.

Back at the ferry terminal, snack on some *pulpo de feria* — twice-cooked octopus, a Galician specialty — at Bar Rodas. Even better, do as the Spanish do: Post up with some *bocadillos* and a bottle of albariño while soaking in the warm Galician *sol*. —KADE KRICHKO

Rodas Beach,
Islas Cíes

