



Visit to Cantabria, Spain 10 – 14 July 2009.

Eighteen students from Year 10 visited the beautiful town of Santillana del Mar in northern Spain to take part in language learning activities and cultural visits. Our pupils interviewed in Spanish a number of local people, and a variety of language tasks enabled the students to practise the vocabulary and phrases learnt at school during the course of the academic year. The town trails in the local village and in the nearby city of Santander gave the group many opportunities to try out their Spanish and to discover key pieces of information relating to the buildings and local points of interest.

Santillana itself is a small town, largely unchanged from the Middle Ages, with cobbled streets and attractive old buildings, and it is well known in Spain as a cultural gem. Spanish visitors from central and southern Spain come to visit in the summer to escape the soaring temperatures of Andalucia and experience a green countryside in the north. It is only 20 minutes from the city of Santander, with its beaches and lively centre; after a town tour in Spanish our students went to the city food market to purchase ingredients for the RGS annual Spanish cooking competition which we staged back at the site.



On another day the good weather allowed the group to have a superb day in the high mountains of the European Peaks; after a terrifying cable car ride we were rewarded by clear views towards León and central Spain. These mountains and sheer cliffs are used by serious mountaineers before tackling climbs in other continents; we watched in awe as climbers descended vertical drops of hundreds of metres. On another day we went to the Altamira Caves for a guided tour in Spanish of some of the oldest cave paintings in the world.



The students' excellent behaviour was a credit to the School, and I would like to thank Miss Sophia Bellaoui for her help in making the visit so enjoyable.

Roger Appleton