tirety. Once the valley ceased to be a border between Navarre and Castile, and Ojacastro.

King Sancho of Navarre donated the Santa María de Lueñe church to San Bárbara. The first information relating to the settlement of the valley was during the 9th century. In 916-919 the realisation of the Church of Lueñe (a monastery), the construction of the Church of San Lázaro (a collegiate church) and the construction of the Church of the Holy Trinity (a collegiate church). In 1498, King Fernando IV the Summoned, later of Castile, requested from King Carlos III. It became known as the Real Fábrica de San Carlos y Santa Bárbara en Ezcaray. In 1785 it passed into the hands of the Royal Treasury, which led to a new resurgence in textile manufacture in the town. The unique “15th” Factory is the last of these unparalleled buildings that were constructed to the manufacture of cloth and lace, which became one of the most important textile factories in Spain. The importance of the town in the last century was based on outstanding furniture manufacturing like blankets and other signature restaurants.

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The importance to the local area of fabric manufacturing like blankets from 100 % hand-made pure wool is worthy of mention, reminding us of the importance the town had in the golden age of the Mesta (medieval association of sheep shepherers in Castile).

As a symbol of the town’s past, an iron ring named “La Argolla del Fuero” still hangs in the Plaza de la Verdura. Its decline began in the year 1808. The consequences of the War of Independence led and set demands of local people to emigrate due to lack of employment. The Real Fábrica ceased textile production in 1845. Nonetheless, in the mid-19th century there were 29 textile factories that employed 1,000 people.

Later find tell us of tombs and objects of Roman origin discovered in the area, giving rise to the Basque place names found here. The pre-Romanesque Autrigones tribe occupied the highlands of the Oja Valley, giving rise to the Basque place names found here.

The extremely interesting main altarpiece dates back to the 16th century. This last chapel houses the Gothic image of the patron of the town. The extremely interesting main altarpiece dates back to the 16th century. The extremely interesting main altarpiece dates back to the 16th century.

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On 28th May 1998, the town of Ezcaray became the first in the Autonomous Community of La Rioja to be declared a Tourist Attraction Town. This is due to the fact that the burgeoning resources and attractions of the town delight its visitors, whatever the time of year. 

WHAT TO SEE

Aside from the Real Fábrica de Paños, the Santa María la Mayor church stands out (both are declared as Monuments of Cultural Interest). This is a 15th-century woodwork building, erected upon a Romanesque structure, constructed between the 12th and 14th century. The extremely interesting main altarpiece dates back to the 16th century, as does the existing museum in its sanctuary, which includes carvings of churches of the hamlets and a large, silver panche cross of Gothic Plateresque style.

Other sites can also be seen, such as the San Lazaro Transact, (16th century), the Santa Bárbara Chapel or the Chapel of the Virgin of the Snows. Each cobbled stone street has its own individual name and charm. The town of Ezcaray is known for its winding streets, whose facades display coats of arms from the 17th and 18th century, with the building of the “La Real Fábrica de Santa Bárbara” (The Royal Factory of Santa Bárbara). In 1712, the Marques of Ensenada supported the creation of the “La Real Fábrica de Santa Bárbara” through royal franchises, in honour of the wives of Kings of Navarre, who supported the factory at that time.

Ezcaray today also offers a wide range of activities for locals and visitors alike, which complement attractions found in the town’s natural environment. Its food and wine, its artistic and historical heritage, its local festivities and traditions, or its role as the skiing HQ of La Rioja.

The town of Ezcaray’s ski station is located 14 km from Ezcaray. Having been recently modernised, the station has capacity to welcome 300,000 visitors a year. It has 22 km of marked ski runs (4 green, 6 blue, 10 red, 2 black and 2 yellow), (at altitudes from 1000 m, 1620 m and 1850 m), with capacity to welcome nearly 15,000 skiers/hour, (light snow cannons. A snow park...)

Ezcaray offers numerous gastro- touristic options based on outstanding basic ingredients and traditional safe-guarded recipes. "Life-size gastronomy," a attraction, is equally charming tapas bars is available throughout the town and together with other signature-restaurants.

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On 20th century and the present day, On 9th July 1916 the Hano – Ezcaray narrow gauge railway was opened. It was used for transporting commuters and freight to and from all the towns and villages along the route. Some trains were linked up with national (RENFE) rail lines. Competition from road transport and the fact that it was narrow gauge led to its disappearance. On 16th January 1964, the Hano – Ezcaray railway closed to the public after forty seven years and a half years in service. Vestiges of the train station remain as a reminder, which today has been converted into a bar/restau- rant. Also, the old railway route enables walkers to enjoy the wonderful landscape thanks to the “Huerta del Ojo”, a reconsecrated stretch of track that constitutes yet another attraction for the numerous visitors to the town.

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The Alto Oja forms a natural region of large environmental and scenic attractions. Nestled in the most north-eastern part of the Iberian System, it belongs to an old Palaeozoic mountain range known as the Sierra de la Demanda. Easy to access, this mountain paradise is dominated by a chain of mountains higher than 2,000 m. Indeed, nine peaks stand taller than said altitude, all of them being crowned by San Lorenzo at 2,269 m.

Ezcaray offers a privileged natural environment for hiking and outdoor sports. Magnificent landscapes and trails flanked by diverse flora (fruit trees, poplar groves, alder trees, beech and pine forests) invite you to discover the surrounding walks and routes. Hundreds of kilometres of mountains and valley are suitable for all levels of mountain-bike enthusiast.

The Hamlets of Ezcaray are found on both sides of the River Oja and in the gullies that nourish it, full of natural heritage and popular architecture, including three-storied stone masonry houses. The hamlets of Azarrue, Zaldierna, Urdanta and Turza are found on the right of the River Oja (and the ruins of Altuzarra and Cibarrena); the following hamlets are found on the left of the River Oja: Posadas, Ayabarrena and San Antón.