

Tour
Information



Christmas in San Sebastian





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to Spain and France.

Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Spanish consulate: 20 Draycott Place, London SW3 2RZ; Tel: 020 7589 8989, Fax: 020 7581 7888.

Open Mon-Fri 0915-1400 (except Spanish National holidays).



Tickets

You will be issued with a return train ticket.

Please take care not to lose your tickets and please check that the details on your tickets are accurate. Your ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.

Standard Premier on Eurostar tickets is indicated by two asterisks in the class type section in the top right hand corner. A light meal will be served to passengers travelling Standard Premier on Eurostar. Standard class Eurostar tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although there is a buffet car serving drinks and snacks.

TGV tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although a buffet car is available.

Train Seats

On all legs of the journey you have reserved seat and carriage numbers which are shown clearly on your ticket.



Baggage

As with most trains, passengers are responsible for carrying baggage onto and off the train. Baggage can be stored on overhead shelves or at the entrance to the carriages. Trolleys are available at St Pancras and Lille, but bags do need to be carried on to the platform. Porters are sometimes but not always available at St Pancras.

Travel Editions recommends a luggage delivery service called **thebaggageman**, where your suitcase can be picked up from your home before departure and delivered straight to your hotel; therefore removing the worry about carrying your cases onto and off the trains.

For further information:

<http://www.thebaggageman.com>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Transfers

On arrival in Hendaye, transfer by coach to San Sebastian (approx. 40 mins) and Astoria 7 Hotel.

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Astoria 7 Hotel, San Sebastian

Housed in the historic Astoria Cinema by the River Urumea the Astoria 7 is a design hotel that plays on its cinematic roots with a décor that pays tribute to movie stars. Just a 15 minute walk from San Sebastian's main sights, the rooms are individually decorated and offer private bathrooms, air-conditioning, TV, minibar, hairdryer and wi-fi. The hotel's facilities include a fitness room, snack bar and restaurant.

Unfortunately rooms at the Astoria 7 Hotel do not include coffee/tea making facilities, so we recommend you bring a travel kettle if required.

For more information please visit the hotel's website: <http://www.astoria7hotel.com>



Food

Eating out in Spain can often be cheap, and meals substantial rather than gourmet. But the Basque Country is an exception to this – the region's capital on the Spanish side of the border, San Sebastián, has the highest concentration of Michelin-starred restaurants after Paris! An excellent way to sample Spanish food (and atmosphere) is to try *tapas* (known as *pintxos* in Basque Country), which are served at any time of day in local bars. These are small tasters or snacks, which range from cheese and olives to squid or meat delicacies. As most of Spain's coastal areas, Basque cuisine is dominated by seafood – freshly caught *bacalao* (salt cod), baby squid, anchovies, *merluza* (hake), sardines, *besugo* (sea bream), clams, crab, tuna, baby eels... Often served with a tomato, capsicum pepper, onion and the local *Espelette* pepper side (*piperade*), they are also prepared as a stew or soup, such as *ttoro* or the tuna-based *marmitako*.

But the lush, mountainous inland area also boasts excellent regional produce, including cured meats, sausages, chorizo, *boudin*, the excellent *Jambon de Bayonne*, cheeses, and delicious vegetables, such as peppers, beans, asparagus and artichokes.

Traditional sweets include *Gâteau Basque* (almond and *crème pâtissière* tart), *cuajada* (milk curd) served with honey and walnuts, *macarons*, and *Touron* (*pâte d'amade* or marzipan).

Coffee (*café*) is served black, in small cups, unless a *café con leche* is ordered.

Some restaurants will offer a set meal at a fixed – *menú del día* – at lunchtime, generally good value for money. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, but it is customary to leave small change if good service is provided.

Generally speaking, mealtimes in Spain are much later than in the UK. Lunch is normally taken between 1400 and 1600; dinner is very often eaten any time after 2100 or even 2200.



Drink

Spain is essentially a wine-drinking country, with sherry being one of the principal export products. Its English name is the anglicised version of the producing town *Jerez*, from which the wine was first shipped to England. Wine in the Basque country tends to be light, fresh, fruity, and white, an excellent accompaniment to the seafood of the region – the *Txakoli* DO white wines are young, light, and slightly sparkling. If you prefer a red, try the soft and fruity local *Rioja Alavesa DO*.

In elegant restaurants the wine list will be separate from the main menu, but in less opulent establishments will be printed on the back or along the side of the *menú*. The waiter will usually be glad to advise an appropriate choice. If in doubt, try the house wine (*vino de la casa*).

Well-known Spanish beers (*cerveza*) include *San Miguel*, *Damm*, *Estrella Galicia* and *Cruzcampo*. Spanish brandy is as different from French as Scotch whisky is from Irish. It is relatively cheap and pleasant. Brands include *Carlos I*, *Osbourne* and *Fundador*.

This tour is on a bed and breakfast basis and includes:

- Welcome dinner on arrival
- Christmas Eve dinner in the hotel restaurant
- Christmas Day dinner in the hotel restaurant



Destination

Home to the Basque people, their language, culture and traditions, *Euskal Herria* (the Basque name for their ancestral land) stretches along the rugged Atlantic coastline of Spain and over the western Pyrenees into France. Scenically varied but always spectacular, the wonderful mountain vistas, verdant forests and delightful coastal villages are a joy to explore, whilst being submerged in a rich history and unique vibrant culture.

Places of interest included in the tour:

San Sebastián

San Sebastian is a picturesque resort city with a beautiful location, sitting on the calm La Concha bay and backed by low, rolling hills. Best known for its wonderful beaches, the town itself is packed with fascinating sights, particularly in the charming *Parte Vieja* (Old Quarter), at the foot of the green *Monte Urgull*, where the cramped old streets remain buzzing and lively throughout the day and well into the night. The baroque 18th century *Basilica de Santa-Maria*, the 16th century gothic *Iglesia de San Vincente* and the lovely 19th century architecture of *Centro*, the shopping and commercial district, are the main must-sees.

For more information about San Sebastián, visit:
<http://www.sansebastianturismo.com/en/>

Vitoria Gasteiz

A flourishing medieval wool and iron trade created the fascinating and elegant city of *Vitoria Gasteiz*, filling it with Renaissance palaces, beautiful churches and grey-gold stone mansions. The medieval core of the city is arranged over a small hill and is a wonderful place to wander and discover *plazas*, *palacios* and excellent Basque restaurants!

For more information about Vitoria, visit:
<http://www.vitoria-gasteiz.org>

Biarritz

The grand and chic Atlantic resort of Biarritz became a popular playground for the rich and famous in the 19th century. Today the resort is a haven for surfers, its seafront lined with grand old buildings, including the gorgeous 1930s Casino Municipal and the magnificent 19th century Hotel *du Palais*, one of Europe's grandest hotels. Other sights

include the 19th century *Russian Orthodox Church*, the *Musée de la Mer*, housed in a magnificent Art Deco building and the *Chapelle Impériale*, built in 1864 for Empress Eugenia.

For more information about Biarritz, visit:
<http://tourisme.biarritz.fr/en/home>

Bayonne

Capital of France's Pays Basque, Bayonne has a palpable Basque flavour. This attractive small city is best explored with a pleasurable stroll through the narrow streets of the old town, which are lined with half-timbered houses painted in traditional Basque colours and still surrounded by the original 17th century fortifications. Visit the excellent *Musée Basque* to delve deeper into the culture or the Gothic *St Mary's cathedral* for elegant architecture and attractive stained glass windows.

For more information about Bayonne, visit:
<http://www.bayonne-tourisme.com/en/>

Saint-Jean-de-Luz

Saint-Jean-de-Luz, with its sheltered and sandy beaches and magnificent old town complete with half-timbered mansions, is one of the most popular and attractive resorts on France's Atlantic coast. Thanks to its natural harbour, the town has a strong seafaring history; the wealth this created is well displayed in the turreted *Maison Louis XIV*, where King Louis himself stayed in the build up to his wedding, and in the incredibly rich interior of the *Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste*, where the Sun King married Maria Theresa in 1660.

For more information about St Jean de Luz, visit:
<http://www.saintjeandeluz.co.uk/en>

Pamplona

Best known for its legendary annual 'Running of the Bulls', or *Sanfermines* festival, Pamplona is a wealthy and self-possessed city. Built as a fortress to protect routes into Spain from the Pyrenees before becoming the capital of the fiercely independent state of Navarra, the compact *Casco Antiguo* (old town) is filled with quaint twisting stone lanes leading to beautiful parks, lovely churches and a magnificent citadel. Among this fascinating muddle of architecture from different

eras, don't miss the emblematic 14th century *cathedral of Santa Maria*, the 17th century façade of the *town hall*, the 19th century *Palace of Navarre*, and the *Plaza del Castillo*, lined with delightful cafés.

For more information about Pamplona, visit:
<http://www.turismodepamplona.es/>

Bilbao

A modern and prosperous city, Bilbao nestles in a narrow valley, the surrounding green mountains slopes peeking through the high rise buildings of the city centre. Although not as pretty as its near neighbours, the centre has plenty to entertain, with the spectacular *Museo Guggenheim* (entrance included), a must for modern art lovers. The attractive *Casco Viejo* is a charming place to explore with several major sights including the gothic *Cathedral de Santiago*, the *Teatro Arriaga* and the *Euskal Museoa Bilbao*.

For more information about Bilbao, visit:
www.bilbaoturismo.net

Christmas

It is traditional in Spain for families to have their main Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve. Most shops will be closed on Christmas Day although there will be a limited selection of bars and restaurants open. Your tour manager will have details of opening times and Christmas services.

Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

Reading Suggestions

Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France*.

A general introduction to French culture, landscape and history, it also features an excellent insight into the distinctive character of France's regions.

Robert Laxalt, *The Land of my Fathers: A Son's Return to the Basque Country*.

A perception of the culture and traditions of the Basque through the eyes of American-Basque author Robert Laxalt, who visited the region in the 1960s, wishing to discover his parents' homeland.

Mark Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World: The Story of a Nation*.

Mixing the personal with the political, the individual with the social, Kurlansky wonderfully integrates the human element into an excellent survey of the history and culture of the Basque region.

Charles Richard Weld, *The Pyrenees: West and East, 1859*.

The historian Charles Richard Weld wrote a series of "Vacation Tours", of which the account of his travels to the Pyrenees.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in the Basque Country at this time of year is likely to be cold and there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.

Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – French, Spanish and Basque (*Euskera*).

Religion – Roman Catholic.

National holidays – New Year's Day (01 Jan); Epiphany (06 Jan); Good Friday; Easter Monday; Labour day (01 May); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); Spanish National holiday (12 Oct); All Saints' day (01 Nov); Spanish Constitution Day (06 Dec); Immaculate Conception (08 Dec); Christmas day (25 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink, although some complain it has a strange taste, so it

is generally recommended to drink bottled water, readily available in supermarkets and shops.

Shops and museums – Shops are open Mon-Sat 1000-1400 and 1700-2000. Supermarkets and department stores tend to open 0930-2100/2200, and may open on Sundays in large cities. Please note that some museums close on Mondays.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate General Madrid

Torre Espacio

Paseo de la Castellana 259D

28046 Madrid

Spain

Spain.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Fax: +34 917 146 403

Telephone enquiries: 902 109 356 (in Spain), +34 917 146 300 (if outside Spain).

Consular phone lines are open 0900-1700.

Travel Editions

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