



# Tour Information



## Gastronomy in the Basque Country





## Travel

### Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full six months beyond the duration of your visit.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 Italy.

### 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

Included with your detailed itinerary is an e-ticket, which shows your flight reference number. You will need to quote/show this reference number at the check-in desk and you will be issued with your boarding pass. Online check-in is not available for this booking.

Your Group Scheduled or Club Class ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



### Baggage allowance

We advise you to check the baggage allowances carefully as you are likely to be charged the excess if you exceed the weight limit. Maximum weights for single bags apply.

With British Airways your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus one cabin bag no bigger than 56 x 45x 25cm including handles, pockets and wheels, and a personal bag (handbag or computer case) no bigger than 45 x 36 x 20cm including handles, pockets and wheels.

For more information please visit

[www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.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 Bilbao, transfer by coach to San Sebastian (approx. 1½ hours).

### Departure Tax

The departure tax is included in the price of your flight tickets.

### 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. Please note that some airlines may charge for use of wheelchairs.



## Accommodation

### Hotel Astoria 7

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 Sebastián's main sights, all rooms are individually decorated. Rooms are comfortable with a Sicilian design; all have private bathroom, air-conditioning, TV, free Wi-Fi, hairdryer and mini-bar.

For more information please visit the hotel's website:

<https://www.astoria7hotel.com/en>



## 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 (found on the French side of the border – 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.

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. Today, Britain buys about 75% of all sherry exports. There are four main types: fino (very pale and dry), amontillado (dry, richer and darker), oloroso (medium, full-bodied, fragrant and golden), and dulce (sweet).

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); this will usually be less expensive and will always be the owner's pride.

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, pleasant, although some brandy drinkers may find it a little sweet. Brands include Carlos I, Osbourne and Fundador.

### Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

**Breakfast** – daily

**Lunches** – 3 are included with your holiday

**Dinners** – a farewell dinner is included



## Destination

The Basque Country is one of Spain's most distinctive regions with a culture, language and cuisine that separates its proud population from the rest of the country. This tour is based in the foodie capital, San Sebastian which boasts no fewer than three Michelin 3-star restaurants, as many as London! It is a city that is extraordinarily proud of its cuisine, explored in its many guises on this superb new tour, managed in conjunction with Gabriella Ranelli who has been creating unique Basque experiences for more than 20 years. Led by an expert guide, the tour includes visits to markets, pintxos bars, a vineyard, cookery demonstrations and lots of restaurants.

### Basque Culinary Day

This morning we will visit the market, fish stalls, and gourmet shops to procure ingredients and taste some local products. Afterwards, we'll have lunch with a chef in a members-only cooking club. These clubs are a staple of Basque culture and give great insight into this distinctive region's tradition and history, as well as its culinary heritage. Whilst not a formal cooking class, there will be some room for some participation and learning about the dishes the chef prepares, before enjoying the fruits of his labours. A free afternoon will prepare you for the delights this evening of a private pintxos and wine tour, visiting five different bars in the Old Town, exploring the local gastronomic culture, history and Basque traditions, sampling food and wine all the while.

### San Sebastian

San Sebastián has a justly deserved reputation as one of the world's great dining destinations. This is a city that celebrates the art of eating well in all its many forms – whether snacking on fresh oysters and txakoli (a lightly sparkling white wine) at a seaside cafe or lingering over a decadent, multi-course feast in a Michelin-starred dining room. Pintxos (Basque tapas) bars litter the streets of San Sebastián, and showcase first-rate ingredients from the surrounding coast and countryside combined with the culinary creativity of Basque chefs. When it comes to cooking, no other city quite compares. Once a favourite destination for Spanish royalty, San Sebastián has lost none of its lustre over the years. Elegant art nouveau buildings, ornate bridges and beautifully manicured parks and plazas create a

captivating backdrop to this seaside city. Far from being mere set pieces, the grand architecture remains an integral part of San Sebastián, from the lavish Hotel Maria Cristina to the belle époque spa perched over the shoreline. Meanwhile, the old buildings lining the cobblestone streets of the Parte Vieja have been given new life with charming guesthouses, colourful boutiques and buzzing pintxos bars all part of the great and vibrant mix that is San Sebastián.

### Getaria

Today we spend a full day out along the coast in Getaria, a charming fishing village where you can enjoy fresh-caught fish right at the port accompanied by the local white wine called txakoli. Moreover, it is the birth town of the famous fashion designer Balenciaga and the town has a museum devoted to him. Getaria is situated on the Bay of Biscay and is about 25km west of San Sebastian. We will visit a family-run txakoli winery for a tour and tasting, learn about the history of the town during a stroll through the charming fishing village of Getaria, and have a grilled fish lunch overlooking the port.

### Reading suggestions

#### *Life and food in the Basque Country: Maria José Sevilla*

In this beautifully written book, Maria José Sevilla describes the region through the eyes of men and women whose lives embrace every aspect of its cooking and culinary traditions.. The author takes us from market to caserío, or farmstead, and shows how the strength of Basque cuisine comes from the quality and range of local produce: superb fish from the Cantabrian coast, cheeses and wild mushrooms from the mountains, and vegetables and fruit-including apples for cider-making-from the caseríos of the valleys.

### 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.



## The Basics

**Climate** – The weather in the Basque Country at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but 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](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

### Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

### 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 7841 023807

**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](mailto: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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