



BASQUE LANDS- a 10 days journey

ITINERARY

Day 1: Biarritz → St Jean de Luz(-)-20min/11miles (18km) *Labourd region*

Welcome to the Basque Country! You will pick up your rental car at the airport of Biarritz, the coastal jewel of the Labourd region and your introduction to the idyllic Basque Lands.

During the mid-19th century, the Empress Eugenia de Montijo, wife of Napoleon III, visited Biarritz and fell in love with its **four miles of sandy beaches**, cliffs, and therapeutic sea waters. Napoleon had a palatial summer residence built for Eugenia next to the sea—“Villa Eugénie”—now called the **Hôtel du Palais**. The Hôtel du Palais is one of the many architectural hallmarks of this golden age, and the belle époque and art deco eras that followed.

Biarritz is also a playground for surfers; a promised land for golfers, Basque Pelota and rugby players; and beloved by other devotees of sea water spa therapy.

Take a stroll along the beach, savor fresh fish at one of several restaurants along **the charming Port des Pêcheurs** (fishermen’s port) and watch the **sunset from the Rock of the Virgin**.

Overnight in St. Jean de Luz at the 4-star Hôtel La Réserve

With its spectacular cliff-top setting, **Hôtel La Réserve** offers a breathtaking panorama of the **Bay of Biscay—an expanse of shimmering blue**, sea spray and salty breezes that offer a soothing lull for one’s inner poet.

Day 2: St. Jean de Luz → La Rhune (B/D)

You will fall in love with the town of **St. Jean de Luz**, which was the homebase for Basque corsairs in the 17th century. St. Jean de Luz sits on a gentle, **crescent-shaped bay** with fine sand and a charming old town whose picturesque Basque houses feature brightly colored timbered shutters.

Also during the 17th century, the Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed on nearby Pheasant Island, ending the long conflict between France and Spain. As a result of that treaty, King Louis XIV of France married the King of Spain’s daughter, Maria Theresa, in St. Jean de Luz in June 1660. This royal wedding took place in the monumental baroque **church of St. Jean Baptiste**, a must-see.

Visit **the house of Louis XIV, la maison de l’infante**, then wander along the Atlantic Ocean from the promontory Sainte Barbe to **the fortress of Socoa**.

In the afternoon, reach the first summit of the Pyrenees Mountains: **La Rhune**.

Hop on the **authentic vintage rack railway** for a 35-minute train ride, and discover the fauna and flora of the Basque mountains. At the top, marvel at a **sweeping vista of the Basque Country’s seven provinces**, including the peaks of the Pyrenees, the grand



beaches of the Landes region, and the Basque coastline from Biarritz to Saint-Sebastian.

At night, enjoy a **romantic dinner at the restaurant Zoko Moko**.

Zoko Moko is a family-owned Basque restaurant serving cuisine in a coastal setting. You are invited to savor a **tasting menu**, complete with several courses. Each course is paired with a regional wine.

Overnight in St. Jean de Luz at the Hôtel La Réserve

Day 3: Les plus beaux villages de France (B)

The French Basque Country has numerous charming, rustic **villages scattered among the green hills of the countryside**.

We have selected the most beautiful of these, most of which have received the prestigious award, “Les Plus Beaux Villages de France,” which aims to preserve and develop the cultural heritage of these communities.

Itxassou

Itxassou is famous for its cherries. In spring, when the white cherry trees blossom, the pastoral village roads are a delight to the senses. At the end of the valley, you can clearly see verdant Mondarain Mountain with its crowned summit. Mondarain is the site of “La cours des crêtes du Pays Basque,” an annual mountain race that attracts runners from around the world.

Wander in the streets of the village and visit the **parish church**. This imposing white building of the 17th century is one of the most characteristic of the Basque Country architecture. The cemetery, along the church, shelters **200-year-old tombstones**. The church itself is impressive, with its three floors of galleries, its carved and gilded pulpit, and a central gilded wood altar.

Espelette

Espelette is a **lovely village** in the interior of the Labourd province, **well known for its dried red peppers known as “Piment d’Espelette.”**

Wander the streets and admire the pretty houses with **drying peppers hanging from the facades and balconies**. Afterwards, stroll down to the church alongside a gentle stream that offers an authentic, tranquil setting.

The village has many stores and boutiques selling artisanal products including the famous peppers, as well as local chocolate and cheese.

Do not miss a visit to the **chocolate factory Antton** and taste the dark chocolate spiced with espelette pepper. It is absolutely delicious!

Ainhoa

Ainhoa is a “bastide” or **walled village on the pilgrims’ route to Santiago de Compostela**. It is on the boundary of the provinces of Labourd and Navarre, just a few miles away from Espelette and Sare. It boasts **picturesque red-and-white houses** along its only street.

Ainhoa was built during the 13th century for use by the nearby **Urdazubi-Urdax Monastery**. The center of the town next to this main street hosts the three most traditional elements of any Basque village: the church, a surrounding graveyard, and the fronton—the walled court for local pelota games.

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Sare

Sare is **nestled at the foot of the legendary mountains of Axuria** and La Rhune where traditions such as sport have been preserved through the ages.

The houses in Sare are built in the authentic style of the region: all have white walls and window shutters painted in the traditional colors of red or green. Be sure to visit the 17th century Church of Saint Martin and Saint Catherine's Chapel. We also suggest visiting the "**Museum of the Basque Gateau**," which offers an insightful look into the history of this signature Basque pastry—a thick, tart-like cake with cream or jam filling.

La Bastide Clairence

The bastide—a fortified town—was founded in the 14th century by Louis I of Navarre prior to his becoming King Louis X of France. Here you will once again encounter the traditional white houses with deep crimson or green shutters.

The village is charming, and most shops in town are owned by local artisans. The church is more ornate on the outside than most in the area. The church's interior includes wooden galleries along the walls. This design is common among traditional Basque church interiors and gives them a warm, welcoming feel. A historical Jewish cemetery with lies beside church.

To conclude your visit, we recommend visiting the pastry shop on Rue Notre Dame where you will find delectable **macaroons**.

Overnight in St Jean de Luz at the Hôtel La Réserve

Day 4: St Jean de Luz → St Jean Pied de Port-(B/D) -40miles/1h (64km)-Basse Navarre region

Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port is the capital of the historic Basque province of Lower Navarre. Donibane Garazi, as it is known in Basque, is a small, walled town located on the Nive River, only 8 kilometers away from the Spanish border.

The town is famous for being one of the traditional **starting points of the Way of St. James (the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela)**. The town is located on the Roncevaux Pass at the base of the Pyrenees Mountains. Hence the suffix of the town's name "Pied-de-Port," or "foot pass."

St-Jean-Pied-de-Port is a **fortified and has numerous gates**. The most well known is the Porte St-Jacques which lies along the Route of Santiago de Compostela. This gate was designated as an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998. Inside, the town small but nonetheless charming. The Pont d'Eyheraberry (Eyheraberry bridge) that crosses the Nive River is a historic Roman bridge and one of the highlights of the town.

Don't leave Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port without walking up the cobblestoned **Rue de la Citadelle** to the citadel. From there, enjoy the lovely panoramic view of the town and the surrounding green countryside with the rolling Pyrenees in the background. The citadel, built in 1628, now houses a school and is unfortunately no longer open to the public.

Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port is also well known for the doorway inscriptions marking almost every house entrance in the town. Many of these inscriptions bear the names of famous former residents or landmarks. One of these inscriptions is from a bakery, where the



price of wheat from 1789 can still be read. These different inscriptions were used during the Basque Renaissance of the early 1900s as a starting point for creating the **Basque Typography** that can now be found throughout the region.

Dinner at the restaurant Les Pyrénées- 1 star Michelin

Chef Philippe Arrambide cooks with exceptional, seasonal ingredients. His dishes are refined, inventive, and highlight authentic quality Basque cuisine.

Overnight in St Jean Pied de Port at the 4 star hotel les Pyrénées

The hotel offers comfortable, quiet rooms and spacious suites, all individually designed with contemporary décor, and offer views overlooking the town, citadel, the pool, and/or the courtyard.

Day 5: St Jean Pied de Port → Guardia 2h20/110 miles (178km) - (B/D) 2 wine tasting tours- Rioja Alavesa region

The majority of the best Spanish wines come from La Rioja. The region is divided into three areas: Rioja Alta, Rioja Baja and Rioja Alavesa. Only Rioja Alavesa is located in the Basque Country and you will find incredible points of interest within this region.

Guardia is a small, walled town set atop a hill **in the heart of La Rioja Alavesa**. The town once held a strategic military position and, because of this, tunnels and cellars were built beneath the houses. After Guardia was no longer of any military value, the villagers began to take advantage of the cellars' cool, dark conditions to ferment wine.

There are countless hundreds of bodegas in the region, but we have selected the best wineries of the Rioja Alavesa:

Enjoy your first wine tasting tour of the day at the **winery Ysios**, a magnificent landmark designed by architect Santiago Calatrava. The gigantic bars of aluminum form the wavy roof, which mirrors the mountains in the background and fits seamlessly into the surroundings.

Then, visit the **Bodega Viñaspre**, which offers a tour that takes you back in time to see how the wine was made for centuries. There you can see wine how wine was traditionally housed in old stone-carved tanks, along with some examples of simple machines that were used in times past.

Overnight and **dinner** in Guardia at the **Hotel Collado**

This beautiful old mansion, built in 1900 and stylized as a **castle**, befits the ancient townscape of Laguardia.

You will enjoy a traditional Basque dinner in the tavern of the castle, buen provecho!

Day 6: El Ciego-2 wine tasting tours

Your first visit today will be **the winery Marqués de Riscal** for another **wine tasting tour** at an architectural wonder. Designed by Frank Gehry, the building's roof is a tangle of titanium ribbons, similar in style to Gehry's Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao.

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The structure shimmers in pink, gold, and silver tones. The color palette is inspired by Marqués bottle of wine: pink for the wine, gold for the metal net that covers the bottle, and silver for the foil around the cork.

The adjacent lookout point, “**Aires de San Roque**,” offers a nice view of Ciego y Guardia.

The last highlight of your stay in La Rioja will be the traditional “**bodega**” **Valdelana**—a 500-year-old winery. There you will see first hand the three essential factors for creating high quality wines: soil, climate and grape variety. Valdelana’s has an ideal location between the mountains Sierra de Cantabria and the Ebro River. Enjoy the wine tasting!

Overnight in Guardia at the **Hotel Collado**

Day 7: Guardia → Bilbao (B)-1h20/69miles (111km) - Biscaya region

Bilbao is the largest and most cosmopolitan city of the Spanish Basque Country and the **mecca of Basque art and design**. Don’t miss the **Guggenheim Museum Bilbao** designed by Frank Gehry. The construction of this impressive building marked a turning point in the history of Bilbao. It is a spectacular sculpture-structure, blending fine art and architecture that integrate within Bilbao's urban landscape.

Other impressive contemporary buildings worth visiting include: the Bilbao metro, designed by Sir Francis Norman; the airport, by the architect Santiago Calatrava; and the community center, by Philipp Stark.

El Casco Viejo, or “Las Siete Calles,” is a must see. These seven streets run through the colorful medieval town and offer a sample of the city’s traditional architecture. Do not miss the **Basque museum, the Arriaga theater, and the market, La Ribera. La Alhondiga** (a wine warehouse converted into a cultural space and the **Campos Eliseo Theater** (a traditional theater with Moorish architecture) are also worth visiting.

Overnight in Bilbao at the **4-star Hotel Miró**

Located across from Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum, Hotel Miró is boutique hotel created by fashion designer Antonio Miró. It offers chic rooms decorated in the minimalist style.

Day 8: Bilbao → San Sebastian (B) - 1h/61miles (98km)- Guipuzkoa region

After breakfast, head northwest to the historic town of **Guernica**. This town is considered hallowed ground by the Basques and was immortalized in **Picasso's masterpiece** “Guernica.” Later, pass through the nearby **Urdaibai Natural Biosphere Reserve**, designated by **UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve** in 1984. The fishing port of **Bermeo** lies adjacent to it.

Enjoy lunch at the **San Juan Gaztelugatxe**. This beautiful island situated off the Basque shore in the Bay of Biscay is accessible by a man-made stone bridge. The bridge transitions into a narrow path that contains 241 steps and zigzags its way to the rocky peak, where you’ll discover a tiny church dedicated to John the Baptist.



From here, head to San Sebastian by taking the lovely coastal road and stop at **Zumaia**, a charming fisherman port.

Overnight in San Sebastian at the 4-star **Hotel Villa Soro**.

Villa Soro is comprised of two buildings, one of which was built in 1898 and is a historical heritage landmark of San Sebastian.

Day 9: San Sebastian

Welcome to San Sebastian, the gastronomic capital of Spain. San Sebastian (Donostia in Basque) is an enchanting city with **beautiful beaches and an impressive culinary scene**, boasting **15 Michelin stars among seven of its restaurants**. Explore the center of Basque cuisine as you stroll among bars and restaurants through the narrow streets of **Parte Vieja**, the old district of Donostia at the foot of Mount Urgull. The Old Town is known for having the highest concentration of bars in the world. We recommend you partake in “ir de pintxos”—a barhopping adventure to sample Basque-style tapas; help yourself and leave the toothpick so that the barman will know how many you have had.

Take a walk along **La Concha**. This crescent-shaped bay with luxurious beachside mansions is lined by an ornate white railing that has become a symbol of the city.

Queen Maria Cristina established her royal belle époque summerhouse in San Sebastian. The summerhouse influenced the architecture of many buildings in the area. A stroll through Parte Vieja’s romantic center is offers an intimate view of this Parisian-style architecture.

Do not miss **Santa Maria del Coro church**, **Constitution Square** and **San Telmo Museum** (a museum dedicated to Basque culture and history).

Note: the best city viewpoint is from atop Mount Urgull facing la Concha. From there you will readily see the **Peine del Viento**- a group of steel sculptures located at the end of Ondarreta beach. Designed by local sculptor Eduardo Chillida, it is probably the most iconic image of San Sebastian.

Dinner at the 1-star Michelin restaurant, Zuberoa

Zuberoa offers exquisite cuisine consisting of seasonal dishes inspired by Basque culinary tradition. The restaurant is located in the old village of Oiartzun in an ancient Basque mansion. Its walls have been witness to the passage of more than six hundred years.

Overnight in San Sebastian at the 4-star **Hotel Villa Soro**

Day 10: San Sebastian → Biarritz (B) -40min/32miles (51km)

Have a final Basque breakfast before dropping off your rental car at the airport and catching your flight home.



DETAILS

- ❖ **Tour duration:** 10 days/9 nights
- ❖ **Price:** Starting at \$2300 per person –based on shared double rooms
- ❖ **Group Size:** 2 person minimum
- ❖ **Season:** All year long -We recommend travelling from May to mid-October
The summer season hosts many fairs and traditional seasonal exhibitions
- ❖ **Countries visited:** France and Spain
- ❖ **Comfort:** Superior - 4 star hotel
- ❖ **Transportation:** car rental- self guided tour
- ❖ **Accommodation:** 4-stars hotels -2 or 3 stars hotels by request only

Additional Information: B-L-D

B is breakfast /**L** is lunch/ **D** is dinner

Passport and visa:

Passport must be valid for a minimum of six months at entry, and valid for an additional three months beyond your planned date of departure from the Schengen area. No visa required for US citizens

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/france.html>

❖ **What's included:**

- Accommodation in a shared double room in selected 4 star hotels
- Car rental for 10 days.
Pick up and Drop off at Biarritz international airport- Automatic car-Category B/Intermediate-Limited mileage: 1500 miles-Collision Damage Waiver (CDW)-Theft protection-VAT-Airport and railway taxes-GPS
- All breakfasts (except the day of your arrival)
- 4 Wine tasting tours with wine tasting from 2 to 4 wines per visit
- Entrance fee tickets for the winery visits
- 4 Dinners: 2 dinners in 1 star Michelin restaurants as well as 2 dinners in outstanding restaurants of our selection

❖ **What's not included:**

- Lunches and 5/9 dinners
- International flight
- Personal expenses and travel insurance

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- Museum entrance fees
- Gas and supplementary rental car insurance

BASQUE CORNER

Music

OLDARRA-Agur Jaunak

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9tU3lISlw&list=PL5MIPo2Rkce9MS-QvPRQsyodQs7mTZ3>

HEGOAK-Anne Etchegoyen et le chœur Aizkoa

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvJxSnYWdp0>

MAURICE RAVEL-Le Boléro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r30D3SW40Vw>

Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga-Soka Koartetoak

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXUFe7hlmGk>

Conversation corner

The Basque language, like its people, is fiercely independent and refuses to fit in to such misguided preconceptions. Basque, is a language isolate, with no demonstrable genealogical relationship with other languages.

Hello: Kaixo!

Goodbye : Agur

Thank you : Mikesker

Nice to meet you: Urte askotarako

Welcome: Ongi Etorri

Bon appétit: On egin

Have a nice day: Egun on zuri

Food recipe : Marmitako

Good evening: Gabon

Cooking-Zuzulu favourite dish

MARMITAKO

Ingredients:

3 dried sweet red peppers

3 tablespoons of olive oil

2 onions finely diced

2 green bell peppers, seeded and diced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon sweet paprika

2 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/marmitako-recipe.html>