



## SPAIN

# GRAND TOUR OF BASQUE COUNTRY - SELF-DRIVE (TOUR CODE: 13770)

### STARTS AND ENDS

Bilbao to  
San Sebastian

### TRAVEL PERIODS

01 Jan 24 - 20 Dec 25

### EXPERIENCE

Cultural  
Self-Drive

### TRAVEL STYLE

Independent Holiday Packages

Join us on a self-drive adventure through the beautiful Basque Country, where the scenic open roads will lead us to incredible cultural experiences. Immerse yourself in the avant-garde charm of Bilbao, explore the captivating coastal beauty of San Sebastian, and discover Vitoria Gasteiz, the charming capital of the Basque Country.

## Highlights

- Indulge in the exquisite charm of boutique, **exclusive 4-5-star accommodations** that will elevate your experience and ensure you savour each and every moment to the fullest.
- All the **tours included are provided privately**, ensuring you have the undivided attention of a **knowledgeable English-speaking official guide/host**.
- Explore the **Basque Coastline**, including the charming village of Getaria and other coastal gems en route to San Sebastian
- Experience the Basque Country's **pintxos culture**, savouring small, artfully crafted bites in a vibrant and social atmosphere

Embark on a captivating self-drive adventure through the heart of the Basque Country, where each day unfolds like a vibrant canvas of cultural richness and breathtaking landscapes.

Begin your journey in the pulsating city of Bilbao, where the fusion of history and modernity awaits. Wander through the enchanting Old Quarter, savoring the local rhythm, and let the evening guide you on a pintxos tour, where each bite tells a tale of Basque culinary artistry. The next day, dive into Bilbao's cultural tapestry, exploring the iconic Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

As you traverse the Basque Coastline, discover hidden gems like Getaria, where the charm of coastal life unfolds. In San Sebastian, immerse yourself in the city's elegance, indulging in a pintxos lunch that mirrors the vibrant spirit of the region. Venture across the border into the French Basque Country, exploring Biarritz and Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where two cultures seamlessly collide.

Let the open roads and cultural treasures weave a tapestry of inspiration, making this Grand Tour an unforgettable chapter in your travel story.

## INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights in Bilbao at Grand Hotel Domine - 5\*
- 4 nights in San Sebastian at Hotel Maria Cristina- 5\*
- 5 days Car Rental (from Day 3- Day 7)
- Private Visit to Old Quarter and Pintxos Tour of Bilbao
- Half-day Tour of Bilbao including the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
- Full-day private excursion of the Basque coastline with a stop en route in Getaria to San Sebastian
- Half-day introductory tour of San Sebastian followed by a pintxos lunch.
- Full-day private excursion to Biarritz and Saint-Jean-de-Luz - Exploring the French Basque Country

Freedom of Choice Days

## Freedom of Choice



Our Freedom of Choice program offers flexibility, by allowing you to choose from different options on pre-selected days.

Our per person price includes one tour on each Freedom of Choice day, as follows:

- One "Freedom of Choice" tour on day 6

Expand the itinerary below for more details.

Please note, if more than one room is selected during the booking process, our team will contact you afterwards to discuss options.

## ITINERARY

Day

1

### Bilbao

Make your way to Bilbao and check in at your hotel.

Later, join us on a **Bilbao Private Visit to the Old Quarter and Pintxos Tour!** Explore the charming old town, known as the "Siete Calles," which is filled with historical monuments and beautiful churches, including the Santiago Cathedral and Plaza Nueva, the bustling center of city life. Don't miss the opportunity to indulge in the delicious pintxos, a local specialty found in every bar and tavern. Our knowledgeable local guides will make sure you try some of the most authentic and award-worthy pintxos.

Immerse yourself in the rich history of Bilbao as you stroll along its cobblestone streets, interact with friendly locals, experience the vibrant cultural atmosphere, and discover unique stores. It's an unforgettable experience in one of the most vibrant cities in Northern Spain. We will take you to the heart of **Basque cuisine**, where tradition and innovation merge to create mouthwatering pintxos. Each **pintxo** is a carefully crafted combination of selected ingredients on a slice of bread, guaranteeing a memorable culinary experience.

Our expert local guides, who are passionate food enthusiasts just like all Basque people, will accompany you on this journey of taste sensations. They will ensure that all the pintxos and drinks served during the tour perfectly match your personal preferences.



Overnight stay in Bilbao at **Grand hotel Domine** or similar.



Day **2**

## Bilbao

After breakfast, discover the wonders of Bilbao on this incredible half day private guided tour.

Get ready to be amazed by the modern urban layout and the iconic **Guggenheim Museum**, a true masterpiece brought to life by the brilliant architect Frank O. Gehry. Since its grand opening in 1997, this remarkable museum has become a symbol of Bilbao's urban revival, showcasing incredible works by renowned artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Jeff Koons, and Yves Klein.

Overnight stay in Bilbao at **Grand hotel Domine** or similar.

Breakfast



Day **3**

Bilbao Getaria San Sebastian

After picking up your rental car, embark on a scenic drive to **Getaria**, nestled in the Txacoli wine region.

Getaria, in particular, boasts a rich history predating the production of Txacoli wine. It is the birthplace of Juan Sebastian Elcano, a lesser-known figure but a remarkable explorer who, in the early 16th century, achieved the unprecedented feat of circumnavigating the globe. Furthermore, Getaria earned recognition as one of the recommended destinations in the New York Times' list of 46 places to visit in 2013. This accolade was partially due to its association with another illustrious local resident, the renowned fashion icon *Cristobal Balenciaga*. Fashion enthusiasts can delve into his legacy by exploring the museum dedicated to his groundbreaking work.

However, the true highlight of a visit to Getaria lies in savouring the **exquisite cuisine offered by the local restaurants**. Indulge in delectable grilled fish, sourced fresh from the harbor's fleet of fishing boats (lunch is not included).

Along the scenic coastal route towards San Sebastian, you will also have the chance to stop and appreciate other picturesque spots.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

Breakfast



Day **4**

## San Sebastian

Embark on a **half-day private guided tour of San Sebastián**, a city intimately linked to its breathtaking landscape, where the sea, mountains, and a glorious bay tell the tale of Donostia. Led by a local expert, delve into the city's rich history, discover the creative minds that shaped it, explore the Old Town's historical sites, stroll along the iconic Playa de la Concha, and marvel at Eduardo Chillida's awe-inspiring "Comb of the Wind" sculptures.

The astounding city of San Sebastián offers a splendid combination of breathtaking landscapes, rich historical heritage, ground-breaking architectural wonders (such as the Kursaal Congress and Auditorium Center designed by the esteemed recipient of the Pritzker Prize, Rafael Moneo), an unparalleled gastronomic experience that tantalizes the senses.

To all residents of San Sebastian, the term "**pintxos**" evokes visions of delectable delicacies, ranging from simple bites to highly intricate creations of haute cuisine. Such is the passion of San Sebastian's residents for their gastronomy and pintxos that the city organizes an annual competition, wherein bars strive to craft the most delicious and innovative pintxos. Victorious establishments proudly display their plaques outside their doors, with some earning widespread acclaim for a particular dish.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

Breakfast, Lunch





Day **5**

## San Sebastian Biarritz & Saint-Jean-de-Luz San Sebastian

After breakfast, your guide and driver will meet you at your hotel in order to explore the remarkable Basque coastline.

**Biarritz**, also referred to as the "king of beaches and the beach of kings," gained popularity as a result of Eugenie de Montijo and Napoleon III making it their preferred vacation spot. The beaches are a remarkable blend of diverse architectural styles, where tranquil families coexist with vibrant surfers.

**Saint-Jean-de-Luz** is deeply rooted in fishing traditions. The town also boasts impressive architectural structures, such as the Maison Louis XIV and the Maison de l'Infante, serving as reminders of the Sun King's time in the town when he married Maria-Theresa, the Spanish Infanta, in 1660. You can stop for lunch (not included) in a delightful farmer's market, brimming with Basque gastronomic delicacies and imbued with a lively atmosphere (takes place every Tuesday and Friday) or in one of the local restaurants.

Additionally, we recommend making a stop in **Hondarribia**. The town's center is anchored by two historically significant neighborhoods: the old town, which features a labyrinth of cobblestone lanes winding past medieval stone palaces and traditional Basque wood-beamed houses, and the fishermen's village known as the Marina. Along San Pedro Kalea, a tree-lined street, elderly men gather on benches next to vibrant pintxo bars, adding to the lively ambiance.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

Breakfast



## Day 6

### San Sebastian Vitoria Gasteiz San Sebastian/ Rioja Alavesa

Drive from San Sebastian and choose between our Freedom of Choice options.

If you would like to spend a **half-day in Vitoria Gasteiz**, returning in the evening to San Sebastian, or opt for a **full day in Vitoria Gasteiz and Rioja Alavesa**, enjoying a wine tasting and an overnight stay at the prestigious Marques de Riscal.

Overnight stay in **San Sebastian/ Rioja Alavesa** in a 5\* hotel.

Breakfast

#### Freedom of Choice Options

- **Half-day excursion to Vitoria Gasteiz:**

Take a half-day excursion to Vitoria Gasteiz - Blend of Contemporary and Medieval Architecture.

**Vitoria Gasteiz** is renowned for its sophisticated and elegant atmosphere, with great attention paid to its historic district. This unique area stands out in Spain due to its combination of contemporary architecture and historical landmarks. A prominent feature of the city's cosmopolitan lifestyle is the prestigious Cathedral of Santa María, which is currently undergoing restoration and is open to the public.

The ongoing restoration of the Cathedral has revealed fascinating stonework that tells a captivating story. By visiting this 13th-century church-fortress, participants will have the opportunity to witness the refurbishment process. This exclusive tour allows for close observation of the scaffolding and requires wearing protective gear, granting access to areas that are usually off-limits. Additionally, there is an extraordinary archaeological exhibit located beneath the cathedral, providing valuable insights into the origins of the city.

During the visit to Vitoria, which was named the European Green Capital in 2012, we recommend three additional stops. These include the BIBAT, Fournier Naipes, and Archaeology Museums. The Fournier Naipes Museum, housed within the Renaissance Bendaña Palace, boasts the world's most extensive collection of playing cards. The Archaeology Museum, designed by acclaimed architect Francisco Mangado, proudly displays 1,500 original artifacts from Álava, spanning from prehistoric times to the Middle Ages.

This comprehensive excursion offers a captivating blend of architecture, contemporary projects, and the opportunity for imaginative exploration. The experience includes a private guided tour led by a specialist, architect, or knowledgeable guide.

Return to San Sebastian for your overnight stay.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

**OR**

• **Full day in Vitoria Gasteiz and Rioja Alavesa:**

Start by taking a **half-day excursion to Vitoria Gasteiz** - Blend of Contemporary and Medieval Architecture.

**Vitoria Gasteiz** is renowned for its sophisticated and elegant atmosphere, with great attention paid to its historic district. This unique area stands out in Spain due to its combination of contemporary architecture and historical landmarks. A prominent feature of the city's cosmopolitan lifestyle is the prestigious Cathedral of Santa María, which is currently undergoing restoration and is open to the public.

Continue to **Rioja Alavesa** and enjoy **2-Hour Guided Tour** of the Marqués de Riscal Winery in La Rioja Alavesa.

La Rioja is renowned for its wine, evident even in its name. The region's unique geographical location in the Ebro Valley, favorable climatic conditions, and soil composition have made it an ideal area for grape cultivation, resulting in our exceptional wines. Over time, a local culture centered around wine production and aging has developed, turning the people of this region into skilled experts in this intricate craft. A visit to the wineries of Rioja should be savored, taking the time to appreciate the picturesque countryside, explore the vineyards, and gain a deeper understanding of the origin of it all.

Bodega Marqués de Riscal, one of the oldest and most esteemed Rioja cellars, holds a prominent position in the national and international winemaking industry. The architectural masterpiece created by Frank Gehry for the stunning hotel is a testament to his brilliance and originality. For admirers of contemporary architecture, a visit to this iconic hotel and its historic winery is an unparalleled experience.

Immerse yourself in this extraordinary journey, which includes a private guided tour of the winery, vineyards, and cellar, culminating in an extensive wine tasting featuring their finest selections perfectly paired with delicious regional delicacies. Let's raise a toast to life and enjoyment! Cheers!

**Wine tasting is included** as part of the experience.

Overnight stay in **Rioja Alavesa** at **Hotel Marques de Riscal**.

Day **7**

## San Sebastian

After breakfast, check out of your hotel and drop off your car rental in San Sebastian.

End of the services.

Breakfast

## ACCOMMODATION

### Gran Hotel Domine

#### Bilbao

The Gran Hotel Domine is located in the city's most desired location, directly opposite Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

With 145 air-conditioned and soundproof, some with views of the Guggenheim, guests can enjoy a relaxing stay in the heart of Bilbao. Rooms feature en-suite bathrooms with bathtubs, bathrobe and slippers, free WiFi, USB connection and a 40" flat-screen TV with international satellite channels and HDMI.

Breakfast is served on the roof terrace with spectacular views over the museum and the River Nervion. Guests can also sample different dining options at Le Café restaurant or at Sixty-One Lobby Bar. The Hotel Domine has also a Wellness Centre with fitness area, sauna and Turkish bath.





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## Hotel Maria Cristina

### San Sebastian

Since it opened in 1912 Hotel Maria Cristina a Luxury Collection Hotel has been intimately linked to the history and cultural life of San Sebastian. In the late 19th century the seaside town on the southern point of the Bay of Biscay became a favourite destination for royalty and aristocrats who came to enjoy the sunshine and newly recognized therapeutic properties of sea bathing.

San Sebastian had passed from being a sleepy fishing village into a thriving cosmopolitan town requiring luxurious, modern facilities to meet the demands of its discerning guests. The majestic design of the hotel by architect Charles Mewes, the man responsible for the Ritz in Madrid and Paris, combined with the property's enviable river setting and sea views, resulted in it immediately becoming the favored accommodation for international high society.



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## Hotel Marqués de Riscal, a Luxury Collection Hotel

### Rioja

This stunning 21st-century chateau was designed by internationally renowned architect Frank Gehry and is a true masterpiece. Located in The City of Wine this 5-star hotel is truly an adventure of a lifetime. Prepare to savour a one-of-a-kind experience of all the senses at Hotel Marques de Riscal.

Enjoy local cuisine and fine wines at 1860 Tradicion or Marques de Riscal Restaurant, both overseen by Michelin-starred Chef Francis Paniego,



or soak up the benefits of the grape at the Vinotherapie SPA Caudalie Marqués de Riscal. Welcome to the only hotel created by Frank Gehry where each of the unique 61 guestrooms and suites promises to enchant with exceptional designer touches and enviable views of the countryside, medieval town of Elciego or the striking architecture.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Spanish

### LOCAL CURRENCY

Euro

- Please note that this product is not part of our Flexible booking policy as the supplier terms and conditions apply. Our Team will advise you of the exact booking conditions at the time of the booking.
- All services are subject to availability and prices may fluctuate between the time your proposal is prepared and when the trip is confirmed. When a final itinerary is set, we will provide you with the final price for the trip. We recommend you book on the early side to secure the best guides and hotel rooms, and to avoid disappointment.
- All **private tours** and experiences **can be adjusted based on the requirements and preferences of our clients**. Half-day tours range from 3 to 4 hours; full-day tours are approximately 8 hours in length.
- All transfers are with English-speaking professional drivers. The vehicles vary between a Mercedes E class or Mercedes Minivan, depending on the type of service and number of passengers.

### Excluded

- International airfares and taxes
- Domestic airfares and taxes, unless otherwise specified in our holiday package
- Visa expenses, processing and issuance fees
- Meals other than as specified in our holiday package
- Travel Insurance or expenses of a personal nature (mini-bar, phone call, laundry, etc.),
- Tips or gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, hotel, restaurant or boat staff, etc.
- Or any other travel expense that has not been included in our holiday package