

SPAIN: CAMINO DE SANTIAGO NORTE & BASQUE COAST

8-days/ 7-nights **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn walking holiday from San Sebastian to Bilbao



A moderate walk following the wild Atlantic Coast and offers a wonderful exploration of the picturesque and unique Basque countryside and culture. Begin in San Sebastian (Donostia), on the Bay of Biscay, with its photogenic waterfront promenade, cobblestoned old town and vibrant dining scene, including some world-renowned and Michelin-starred restaurants and many tapas bars. Follow the Bay of Biscay and Cantabrian Sea, stopping in charming fishing villages and ports for a taste of rural Basque life. And visit Gernika (Guernica), a village made famous by the painting of the same name by Pablo Picasso.

The route mostly follows the *Camino del Norte*, an alternative, less-travelled route to the famous pilgrimage city of Santiago de Compostela. Your journey ends in the cosmopolitan, revitalised city of Bilbao where you can visit the world-renowned Guggenheim Museum and the many pintxos or tapas bars, fashionable boutiques and charming old town.

Dates: Daily on demand from April to October.

Difficulty: This walk is best described as moderate and should present no difficulties for anyone in reasonable condition and accustomed to walking up and down 900 metres or so in a day. Average daily walking distances are about 24km or 5 to 7 hours' walking.

Cost from: **\$1545** per person twin share.
Single room supplement from \$595, solo traveller supplement from \$325

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation; breakfast daily; dinner on 4 nights; daily luggage transfers; route notes and maps; tax and service charges, telephone support (if required).

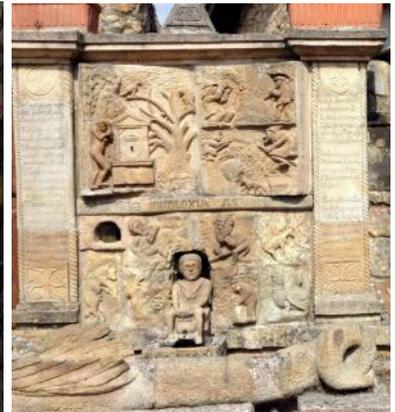
Not included: Lunches, dinner on 3 nights, drinks, entrance and admission fees, personal expenses.

Getting to the start: San Sebastian has a small airport served by flights from Madrid and Barcelona. Alternatively there are coach transfers from Biarritz airport in France (1 hour) or Bilbao airport (1½ hours). By train, San Sebastian can be reached from Madrid, on the overnight sleeper from Lisbon, and from many parts of France with a change at Irun or Hendaye.

Accommodation and Meals: Accommodation is in small 2 and 3-star hotels and simple, comfortable guesthouses and *agriturismos* (farm stay), with daily breakfast. Dinner is included on 4 nights in the more rural locations; in San Sebastian, Gernika and Bilbao dinner is not included, so you are free to choose from the many restaurants and pintxos or tapas bars. Picnic lunches on walking days are not included in the tour cost, but picnic materials can readily be bought in local shops or a packed lunch ordered the night before from your accommodation, cost usually €10-15 per person.

Extra nights of accommodation can be booked at the start and end, or at any stop along the way; ask us for cost and availability when booking. We highly recommend extra nights in San Sebastian and Bilbao.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations



Suggested Itinerary:

Day 1 Arrive San Sebastian.

San Sebastian (Donostia in Basque) has developed a reputation as one of the great food cities of the world, home to three 3-Michelin star restaurants and to countless bars specialising in pintxos (pronounced pinchos), the Basque version of Spain's famous tapas. San Sebastian also boasts two fine city beaches, Playa de la Concha and Playa de Onderrreta, great for swimming, surfing or relaxing. Wander through the Parte Vieja (Old Town) and soak up the vibrant atmosphere; climb Monte Urgull or Monte Igueldo for extensive views of the city, beach and bay; or use the city's bike-share service to explore more widely.

Day 2 San Sebastian to Zarautz

walk @ 19km / 6 hours. Altitude change: + 943m, - 911m

Leaving the beautiful Bahia de la Concha and bustling San Sebastian the walk heads westwards along the coast, through quiet pastures, gently rolling hills and picturesque coastal villages. Arrive into the coastal town of Zarautz, with its sweep of spectacular beach bordered by the Palace of Narros, a holiday destination for 19th Century Spanish royalty. It is also home to famous chef Karlos Arguiñano whose restaurant is right on the beach. This area is known for *txakoli*, a lightly sparkling, dry wine, usually white but occasionally rosé and typically drunk as an aperitif – be sure to sample a glass or two.

Day 3 Zarautz to Deba

walk @ 24km / 7 hours. Altitude change: + 617m, - 654m

Departing Zarautz follow quiet rural roads and walk through picturesque farmland, skirting around the Urola Ibaia river and the town of Zumaia to the lovely seaside village of Deba, at the mouth of the Deba Ibaia river.

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Day 4 Deba to Markina

walk @ 23km / 5 hours. Altitude change + 1099m, - 1019m

Cross the River Deba, then leave the coast heading inland into the mountains. Today's walk begins as a pleasant one through peaceful countryside and green forests, then it becomes more challenging over undulating terrain including Mount Arno (488m). Follow the GR-121 through charming villages to Markina, which marks the border between the provinces of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia. Markina boasts examples of several styles of architecture, including the Basque-Gothic 16th Century church of Santa Maria, Renaissance and baroque palaces, and the neoclassical cemetery.

Day 5 Markina to Gernika

walk @ 26km / 7-8 hours. Altitude change: + 663m, - 741m

The route leaves Markina on a quiet country lane, crossing the river in the little town of Bolibar. This town was once home to Simon Bolivar's ancestors and there is a museum dedicated to the liberator of South America here. Ascend to the medieval church and cloister of Cenarruza and continue upwards through the sheltered forest of Gorontzugarai, then through typical rural Basque scenery, with houses clustered around a church or a *pelota* court. The rural village of Gerrikaitz has several churches and chapels as well as interesting fortified houses. Descend into Gernika, made doubly famous by the 1937 bombing by the German Luftwaffe, perhaps a dress rehearsal for the destruction by bombing in WW2, and by Picasso's masterpiece. The painting hangs in Madrid's Museo Reina Sofia; if you haven't seen the original, do seek out the tiled replica on a wall in town. Dinner is at your own arrangements this evening.

Day 6 Gernika to Lezama

walk @ 25km / 7 hours. Altitude change: + 824m, - 771m

Walk on cobbled pathways and asphalt roads first to the Hermitage of Santa Lucia and then to the village of Morga. Descend through tiny Goikolexea and medieval Larrabetzu before reaching Lezama, your destination for the evening. The iconic fortified tower of Lezama is well worth visiting. For soccer enthusiasts, Lezama is home to the training grounds of Athletic Bilbao.

Day 7 Lezama to Bilbao

walk @ 12 km / 4 hours. Altitude change: + 343m, - 387m

A short walk today allows an early arrival and time to explore the city of Bilbao. Walk mostly through pastures to the town of Zamudio, notable for the Romanesque-Gothic church of San Martin and the medieval Malpica tower. Afterwards gradually ascend to the summit of Mount Avril, where you are rewarded with expansive views of Bilbao and the valley below. You may like to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Begoña, the patron saint of Bizkaia, in the suburbs as you approach Bilbao. The Camino Norte route ends in Plaza de Unamuno in Bilbao's Casco Viejo. Perhaps allow time for a siesta before discovering the city's bustling nightlife. Like San Sebastian there are many pintxos bars dotting the streets, serving up cod, cuttlefish, squid, anchovies, olives, guindilla peppers, jamón, and much more.

Day 8 Depart from Bilbao

Tour ends after breakfast. We recommend extra days in Bilbao to see the famous riverside Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Gehry, which revitalised Bilbao's decrepit industrial port area. The Vizcaya Bridge built by a student of Gustav Eiffel (of Paris fame) is also worth a visit with views across the river, city and hills.



Other walking holidays – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers and meals are available in many parts of Europe through **Outdoor Travel** including the spectacular **Vermillion Coast** Mediterranean walk, the majestic and historical **Cathar Castles** walk, the **Way of St James** from Le Puy in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain or the **Via Francigena**, the pilgrim's Road to Rome in Italy.

We also offer cycling holidays in Europe, the UK, China, Japan, Vietnam, South Africa and New Zealand.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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