

# SUMMER IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

By **BASQVIUM** - Travel, Food and Culture

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Euskal Herria, The Land of the Basques in the local language, is a fascinating destination which comprises in a relatively small piece of land a great diversity of sceneries from the ocean, to the mountain range and from modern cities to countryside and vineyards.

Nestled in a mountainous corner of Atlantic Europe, the land of the Basques is still wrapped in a mystery and legend story.

The origin of this people is uncertain, whose language – Euskera - is said to be the oldest living language in Europe and unrelated to any other spoken in Europe, or indeed the world. Euskera's mysterious origins have fuelled too the debate about, whether the Basques can boast the oldest European culture.

Anytime is a good time to visit The Land of the Basques, but the sunny warm weather, longer days, together with the biggest outdoors festivals season, make summer as the perfect time to explore and enjoy the destination.

Related to the longer days, Summer starts with a very special celebration- the night of Saint John concurring the Summer Solstice.

It is an ancient celebration linked to multiple purifying beliefs, but also a night of witches and magic, that is celebrated in almost all towns and neighborhoods, around a bonfire to welcome the arrival of summer and drive away the evil spirits.

Tradition says that you have to write on a piece of paper two wishes for the future and something that we want to leave behind in our lives, then burn the paper in that bonfire and jump on the fire, at least 3 times, to ensure a year of Luck and health.



And after this traditional night, Summer Festival Season starts all over the Basque Country, beginning with Saint John's Day the 24th of June, with special mention to the pilgrimage to one of the most spectacular natural places in the country - San Juan de Gaztelugatxe.



Every June 24, St. Juan of Gaztelugatxe celebrates the feast of the Saint who gives him a name, with a pilgrimage to which the neighbours of Bermeo village come with devotion, although also

hundreds of people come walking from the rest of the nearby towns and even of distant places of the Basque Country, all attracted by the singular beauty of the landscape.



The interest of the whole is shared by the impressive island, on top of which rises the religious building, access to the small hermitage - which is reached after overcoming a narrow road with 231 steep steps - and the temple itself. Once there, those who come to the pilgrimage should ring the chapel bell three times while they make a wish.

Henceforth this festivity, [you could find traditional festivals in every corner, every week of the Summer](#), with special mention to the capital cities main festivals.



Iruñea – Pamplona opens the festive season, with **San Fermin Festival** and its famous **Running of the Bulls!**

Every 6th of July at 12:00 a.m. the Festival starts with the “txupinazo” (rocket) from the balcony of the City Hall.

From this moment, till the 14th of July, it celebrates 8 days of non stop fiesta.

To be one more in the Festival, you should wear all in white, with a red scarf.

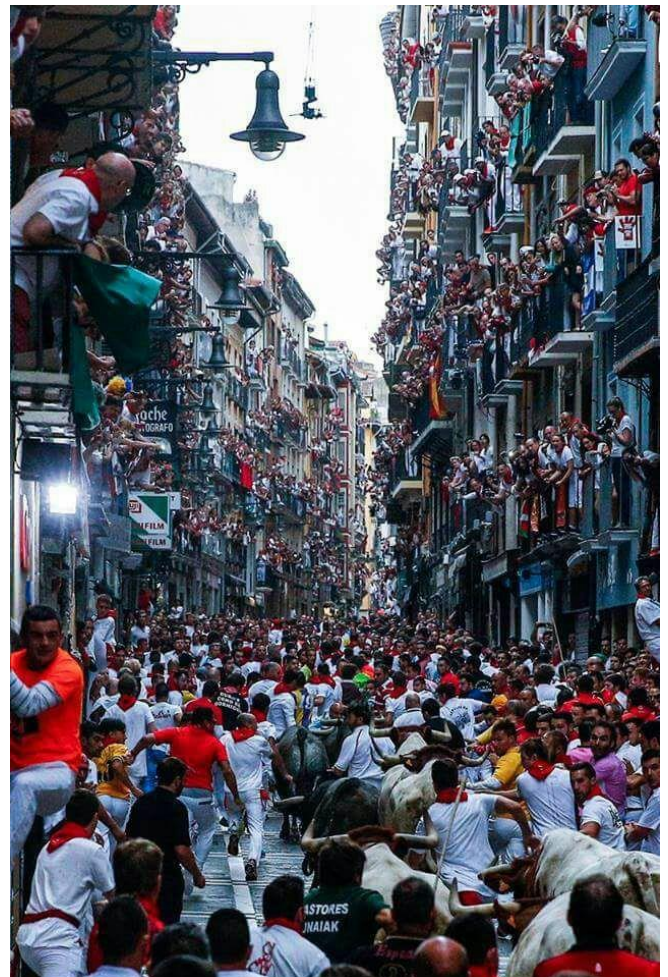
Everyday at 8:00 in the morning starts the most famous event of San Fermin – The Running of the Bulls!

To see it alive, the best way is to rent a balcony from where you can see the running.

After signing 3 times in front of San Fermin praying card, 6 wild bulls guided by other 6 leading ox run among a crowd till the Bull Ring.

With a 875 meter itinerary through the narrow streets of the Old Quarters, the running lasts only around two minutes if no accident happen.

[Here you can check a video of the last Running Day of this year.](#)





And the other four capital follow the festive season, starting with the **city of Baiona - Bayonne**



in the French Basque Country, which we can consider a replica of the San Fermin Festivals, with people even wearing in white with red scarfs.

Every year 26th of July at 22:00 Festival starts, when the Lion King (main carácter of the Festival) throws the City's Keys from the balcony of the City Council. Lasting till 30th of July Running of Bulls are present too like in Pamplona.

The baton is picked up by the administrative capital city of the Basque Country - **Vitoria-Gasteiz** - on **4th of August**, with the descent of Celedon (popular symbol of the Festivals), in the Plaza de la Virgen Blanca.

The city is full of color and music, as its inhabitants intoned Celedon has bought a new home. The extensive program of festivities will take you from the parks and squares with musical performances to the streets of the Old Quarters (Casco Viejo), where you can enjoy the txikiteo (wine drinking), while admiring walls, palaces and, of course, the Cathedral of Santa Maria.



**San Sebastian** takes over from **12th of August**, with the gunshot from the City Hall. This beautiful city dresses up with the best galas during its Great Week. Every night, from Mount Igeldo to



Urgull, fireworks illuminate the bay of La Concha. During the day, take the opportunity to stroll and taste the best gastronomy in the world.

You have a choice:

Haute cuisine from the best chefs, traditional recipes or discover the treasures that hide the pintxos bars of the Old Quarters or the neighborhood of Gros.

And finally the fiesta arrives to **Bilbao** to celebrate its Big Week (Aste Nagusia) on **August 19th**. Discover the street atmosphere in the txosnas (marquees) located on the banks of the river and get lost in the bustle of the Seven Streets (Old Quarters), where one thing is mandatory, the txikiteo of ochotes (gangs) while singing songs. Do not miss it and join them because you will enjoy the taste of the authentic!



Culture is very present also during this week, with plenty of live performances (theater, dancing, music...).

For music lovers it is the time to enjoy the biggest music festivals of the year, like [Azkena Rock](#) in Vitoria Gasteiz (23-24 june), [Getxo Jazz](#) (28 june – 02 July), [BBK Live in Bilbao](#) (6 - 8 July), [Vitoria Jazz Festival](#) (11 – 15 July), [Getxo & Blues](#) (13 – 15 July), [International Folk Festival in Portugalete](#) (17 – 20 July), [Jazzaldia](#) in San Sebastian (20 – 25 July), [Basque Music & Cook Festival](#) in Mundaka (30 July – 01 August) or [Kutxa Kultur Festibala](#) in San Sebastian (15 – 16 September).



Summer is also harvesting time for many of the products that were sown during the Spring, like the famous green peppers from Gernika, different types of red peppers, Ibarra chillies and tomatoes, all of them distinguished by Basque Quality Label.

But it is also time for pumpkin, cucumber, lettuce, aubergine, parsley and fruits like melon and cherry which make up the great vegetable scene in the countryside.





And the King of the seasonal fishes is undoubtedly Tuna, one of the fishes of bigger tradition in the Basque Gastronomy.



Still using traditional and sustainable techniques, Tunas are captured one by one with long rods.

Once the boat is on the fish bank the water sprinklers are turned on to hide the rods. A real spectacle to see alive!

This tuna then will be sold fresh in the markets to prepare traditional dishes like Marmitako – stew of Tuna, potatoes, tomato and peppers.



And it is still time for other species like sardines, anchovies or Meckerel, that last from the Spring season. Perfect time to enjoy the Fish Grills in many of our ports!

In July also finishes the season of the processing of the delicious Idziabal cheese, obtained from



Sheep autochthonous Latxa race; therefore, it is the last moment to visit one of the farms to see this process alive.



On the other hand, if you are keen on sports, it is the time for “Estropadak” the very popular Basque Rowing Competition.

As many of the traditional Basque Sports, this speciality

comes from a working activity. More concretely from our fishermen boats competition to reach first to the fish banks or Whales, what gave way to bets between the boats.

The season last from July to September, ending with the spectacular Concha race in San Sebastian, that attracts thousand of supporters to the most important race of the season.

Certainly, Basques where reknowned internationally as one of the best Whale Hunters. But now instead of hunting them (the last capture of a whale was in 1901), during the summer season we organized boat trips through the Bay of Biscay to see whales and dolphins. One of the most exciting activities for families!



Good weather invites to do more outdoors activities, specially water sports, horseback riding and mountain trekking.

And in August the Football Season comes back again, with the beginning of La Liga.

As you can see, Summer is full of traditions and perfect time to enjoy The Land of the Basques, although is the tourist peak season, specially in cities like San Sebastian and beach resort areas.

And to celebrate that Summer has come with longer and warmer days, here you can watch a beautiful video of the coast of the Basque Country shot from a drone.



We  
wait  
for  
you!

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## TRADITIONS AND FESTIVITIES CALENDAR AUGUST

<b>04-09/08/2017</b>	La Blanca Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Vitoria - Gasteiz
<b>04-09/08/2017</b>	Saint Salvador Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Getaria
<b>04/08/2017</b>	Andra Mari Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Gorliz
<b>10/08/2017</b>	Saint Lorenzo Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Bedia, Fruiz, Lemoa, Maruri, Zaratamo, Iruña de Oca
<b>12-19/08/2017</b>	Semana Grande (Big Week) Festival of San Sebastian. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities, with special mention to the international Firework Competition.	San Sebastian
<b>14-17/08/2017</b>	Semana Grande (Big Week) Festival of Zarautz. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities	Zarautz
<b>14-17/08/2017</b>	Saint Roque Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Portugalete, Gernika, Andoain, Llodio
<b>15/08/2017</b>	Shepherd Day. Exhibition, sale and contest of Idiazabal cheese. Araba Championship of Sheperd Dogs.	Araia
<b>15/08/2017</b>	Feasts in honor to Our Lady of the Assumption. Pilgrimage to the Basilica of Bilbao.	Bilbao and many other villages around the territory.
<b>19-27/08/2017</b>	Aste Nagusia (Big Week) Festival of Bilbao. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Bilbao
<b>24-28/08/2017</b>	Saint Bartolome Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Larrabetzu, Leioa, Ugao, Areatza, Arrasate, Elgoibar.



<b>25-29/08/2017</b>	Saint Agustin Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Erandio, Legazpi, Azkoitia.
<b>27- 31/08 - 01/09/2017</b>	Saint Ramon Nonato Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Trapagaran
<b>28/08 - 01/09/2017</b>	Saint John Beheaded Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities.	Bakio, Gordexola, Hernani, Laguardia.
<b>30/08/2017</b>	Saint Rose of Lima Festival. Parade and grilled Sardines.	Sestao
<b>31/08/2017</b>	Beginning of the Euskal Jaia – Basque Festival in San Sebastian Old Quarters, with the celebration of the Day of the Cider.	San Sebastian



Video of the descent of Celedon character; the start point for “La Blanca” Festivals of Vitoria - Gasteiz.

## CULTURAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM AUGUST

<b>Until 09/11/2017</b>	Bill Viola: retrospective	Guggenheim Bilbao Museum
<b>Until 17/09/2017</b>	Paris, end of century: Signac, Redon, Toulouse-Lautrec and his contemporaries	Guggenheim Bilbao Museum
<b>From 14/07 till 22/10/17</b>	Georg Baselitz. The Heroes	Guggenheim Bilbao Museum
<b>Until 17/09/2017</b>	El Greco painter Exhibit	Bilbao Fine Arts Museum
<b>Until 01/10/2017</b>	"Art and the System" Exhibition. Artium 15th Anniversary	Artium Museum (Vitoria – Gasteiz)
<b>Until 26/10/2017</b>	Exhibit " The book cultural testimony". A tour of the history of the book	Artium Museum (Vitoria – Gasteiz)
<b>Until 25/01/2018</b>	Rachel L. Mellon Collection	Cristobal Balenciaga Museum (Getaria)
<b>01- 30/08/2017</b>	San Sebastián Musical Fortnight. The longest standing classical music festival in Spain	Kursaal Palace (San Sebastian)
<b>Sundays of August</b>	"Titereando" International Puppet show	Vitoria Gasteiz
<b>16/08 – 10/09/2017</b>	Priscilla, Queen of the desert (Musical).	Arriaga Theater (Bilbao)
<b>All month</b>	Music concerts all over the Basque Country during the Festivals mentioned in the previous Festivity Calendar.	All over the Basque Country





## SPORT ACTIVITY CALENDAR AUGUST

<b>01-22/08/2017</b>	Master Internationaux Cesta Punta (Basque Jai-Alai Competition)	Saint Jean de Luz (French Basque Country)
<b>03/08/2017</b>	Athletic Club Bilbao - Dinamo Bucarest (Europe League)	Bilbao
<b>05-08/08/2017</b>	Basque Hand Ball Double Championship – La Blanca Festival	Vitoria - Gasteiz
<b>06/08/2017</b>	Nineth Horse Race	San Sebastian
<b>09-16/08/2017</b>	GANT D'OR Cesta Punta - Jai Alai Basque traditional sport competition.	Biarritz (French Basque Country)
<b>12/08/2017</b>	Hondarribia Basque Rowing Race	Hondarribia
<b>12/08/2017</b>	Tenth Horse Race	San Sebastian
<b>12-15/08/2017</b>	Basque Hand Ball Double Championship – Labastida Festival	Labastida
<b>13/08/2017</b>	Ondarroa Basque Rowing Race	Ondarroa
<b>15/08/2017</b>	Eleventh Horse Race	San Sebastian
<b>19-20/08/2017</b>	Zarautz Basque Rowing Race	Zarautz
<b>20/08/2017</b>	Twelfth Horse Race	San Sebastian
<b>20/08/2017</b>	Starting of La Liga Football Championship. Athletic Club Bilbao - Getafe	Bilbao
<b>22-26/08/2017</b>	Basque Hand Ball Double Championship – Aste Nagusia Festival	Bilbao
<b>24-29-31/08/2017</b>	Slam Internationaux Cesta Punta	Saint Jean de Luz (French Basque Country)
<b>25/08/2017</b>	Real Sociedad - Villareal	San Sebastian
<b>26/08/2017</b>	Alaves - Barcelona	Vitoria - Gasteiz
<b>27/08/2017</b>	Thirteenth Horse Race	San Sebastian
<b>27/08/2017</b>	Eibar – Athletic Club Bilbao	Bilbao

