

THE LAND OF A THOUSAND WINES

SEPTEMBER WINE HARVEST TIME



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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.

In the south part of the region, behind the Cantabrian beautiful Mountain Range, emerges La Rioja, a land bathed by the Ebro river and one of the worldwide best known winery areas.

Probably the most famous denomination of origin for wines in Spain, is often called “The Land of a Thousand Wines”, as few wine regions are as diverse in their landscape as Rioja.

The best time to come, is when Summer declines and grapes are in their best condition to be collected. The Harvest time is a unique experience of colour, smell and taste, what is celebrated with many different Wine Harvest Festivals.



In an age of peak global homogeneity, when distinct cultures are vanishing, there is something invigorating, disorientating even, about arriving in the Basque Country.

Split between Spain and France, the Basque Country is perhaps the most over-achieving locale on the planet right now. Seven provinces, two countries, one people, three languages. A “nation without a state” — left off the map when they drew Europe’s national borders.

With urban excitement, sunny beaches with some of the best surfing in the world, an idyllic climate, a beautiful mountain range, spectacular modern architecture, tasty pintxos (Basque take on tapas) and feisty, free-spirited people, this region is filled with cultural treats.



During this 6 days trip, we will visit cities like Bilbao and Donostia - San Sebastian, through the beautiful Northern coast and taste and enjoy local Gastronomy, Culture and Festivals; finishing in Riojan Winery area to immerse in the culture of Wine, during the best season to do that – Harvesting Time.

ITINERARY

DAY 1: Arrival in the International Airport of Bilbao.

Bus/Van Transfer to the hotel.

Site visits depending on the arrival time. Night in the city.

DAY 2: We start the trip visiting **Bilbao**, the vibrant economical capital city of the Basque Region.

Bilbao today is a prime example of urban restructuring, having transitioned from an industrial city to a city of services and culture.

Thanks to its history and location, Bilbao is a magnificent “cocktail” where architecture, tradition, sea and mountain, character and history are blended to offer the visitor endless leisure and culture opportunities.

The Botxo (Hole), as it’s fondly known to its inhabitants, has now matured into its role of major European art centre. However, in doing so, it hasn’t forgot its past: at heart it remains a hard-working town with a real character. It’s this down-to earth soul the real attraction of the vital, exciting and cultured city of Bilbao.

We will visit the Old Quarters, that houses many monumental buildings, like Arriaga Theatre, Arched Square (Plaza Nueva) and Saint Jaques Cathedral of



Gothic style.

The Old Quarter is also the biggest bet to find authentic

Basque Cuisine, abundant supply, with a strong emphasis on raw materials, and the chance to taste pintxos, a way of

miniature cooking, savoring in every bite true masterpieces.

Unbeatable location to attend a **show cooking of pintxos**, where we will have the chance to cook some of them and of course taste and eat them. For that we will visit the place with the oldest bar licence in the city.

And from the old, we will move to the modern Bilbao, highlighting the spectacular **Guggenheim Museum** designed by Frank O. Gehry, which surprises to the visitor with its originality.



The visit to Bilbao can be completed with a boat trip through the Nervion River, to see the urban transformation of the Metropolitan area.



DAY 3: We take the bus/van to travel along the province of Bizkaia, stopping first in the **Bizkaia Suspension Bridge**. The first bridge of this type built in the world



and the only one still working, recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Located at the end of the stuary of the Nervion river, it is the gate to the sea.

And as the wine is the main protagonist of this trip, if the weather and sea condition allows, we will go on to make a very special visit to one of the unique spots in the Basque Country, the **underwater wine cellar** located in the pristine beach resort of Plentzia.

At 20 meters deep and thanks to a group of passionate and experts of the sea and the world of wines, the best Basque and other regions wines are aged.



We will have the chance to browse the bay, see the seabed and the cellar with underwater images with our own eyes, and enjoy a tasting of "submarine wine" accompanied by tasty regional food.

If the weather is not good enough, we will head down inland to visit a **Txakoli Winery** hidden in the mountains.

Txakoli or Txakolina is a fruity and sometimes slightly sparkling, young white wine produced in the Basque Country.

Originally, txakoli was home-made in Baserris, which are Basque Farm Houses, but nowadays it competes in quality among the best white wines.



They will introduce us in the world of Txakoli, visiting the vineyards and of course tasting the wine.

After finishing, we will go towards **Gernika** village, recognized historically as the place where the

General Councils of Biscay met under the oak known as the Tree of Gernika, symbol of the liberties and where formerly the lords of Biscay, after receiving their title, came to swear the respect of the jurisdiction of Biscay.



Unfortunately famous also because of the 1937 German bombing during Spanish Civil War, a fact dramatically painted by Pablo Picasso in his famous Guernica painting, we will have the chance to visit the historical Assembly House and the Oak Tree complex.



After having lunch in a traditional Basque Restaurant, we will enter the nearby **Gipuzkoa** province, famous for its Cider Houses, Grill Fish Restaurants and the Idiazabal cheese.

After crossing the mountainous Deba Valley, we will travel along the beautiful



Gipuzkoan coast, where highlights the Basque Coast Geopark, tiny fishing villages like Getaria and stunning beaches like Zarautz, to arrive finally to the capital city of **Donostia – San**

Sebastian, famous for its gastronomy and particularly the Pintxos - miniature cuisine raised to the category of art in San Sebastian - where we will make a **Pintxo Crawl** in the Parte Vieja (Old Quarters). This charming old city center is famous for



having the highest concentration of bars in the world. Night in the city.



San Sebastian at Sunset

DAY 4: Donostia – San Sebastian is a circular bay with pristine white sand beaches, that have long attracted wealthy beach-goers in search of sun and sophistication.



This is what made the city famous during the Belle Époque era and it is also where Spanish Queen Maria Cristina established her royal summerhouse.

The evidence of San Sebastián's glamorous past can still be seen throughout the city.

In more recent years, San Sebastian has gained significant press for its cuisine. Apart from the pintxos we tried yesterday, the city alone has 15 Michelin Stars, spread across 7 restaurants and famously boasts more stars per capita than anywhere else in the world.

As the 2016 European Capital of Culture, the city has begun to again reinvent itself,



this time as a cultural destination; without forgetting that the city has been hosting for more than 60 years the International San Sebastian Film Festival, where Hollywood stars have

a compulsory appointment (22 – 30 September) to gain the Golden Shell main recognition.

We will visit the heritage buildings in the Old Part of the city and stroll along the maritime promenade, till the famous sculpture “Comb of the Winds”, where the wild Cantabric Sea hit the coast forming spectacular waves.



For lunch we will experience one of the most traditional and special places related to the Basque Gastronomy - Gastronomic Societies - These masculine redoubts represent



a unique phenomenon and maintain the attachment to local culinary traditions very much alive. We will see alive how they cook traditional receipes like cod in pil-pil sauce or hake “kokotxak”.

And the visit to Donostia can be completed with an excursion to Igeldo mountain, by the charming cable car dated from 1.912 and one of the oldest of this type still working in the country.

From the top of the hill you could have an astonishing views of the sea and the city.

Night in the city.



DAY 5: And today we will move directly to **Rioja**, a land bathed by the Ebro, the largest river in Spain.



Nowadays Rioja is one of the worldwide best known wine areas. Enjoying the mild climate of northern Spain, with plenty of sunshine, enough rainfall and a variety of climates and soils, La Rioja is the perfect place for growing vineyards, specially for the tempranillo grape variety, ideal for the red wines.

Located at the foot of Cantabrian Mountains, composes an impressive scenery, combining medieval villages, with the most modern architecture of some of the wineries.



Ysyos Winery

Today and tomorrow we will have the chance to travel through this fantastic landscape, enjoying the **Wine Harvest Festival** in the village of Yécora and stopping in several wineries to learn about the world of wine, to taste it of course, together with local gastronomy specialties like Potatoes in Riojan style, grilled lamb ribs, asparagus or red peppers.

The harvesting of wine in La Rioja has an ancient lineage with origins dating back to the Phoenicians and the Celtiberians, although the earliest written evidence of the existence of the grape in La Rioja dates to 873. And as was the case in many Mediterranean lands in mediaeval times, monks were the main practitioners of winemaking in La Rioja and great advocates of its virtues.

A relatively small area of only 112 kms east to west and 48 kms north to south, it boasts 240 square kms of interlocking mountain ranges shielding the land from both warm and cold winds, influencing the climate, the terrain, the exposure to sun and water, and therefore as a consequence, the very wine we drink; that's why it is known as "The Land of a Thousand Wines".

La Rioja has a total of 57,000 hectares cultivated, yielding 250 million litres of wine annually, of which 85% is red.

Rioja has the largest barrel inventory of any wine region and there is no doubt that it produces some of the best value oak-aged wine styles from anywhere in the world.

Before visiting the first winery it is convenient to know that there are four main categories within the red wine.

- **Cosecha** (Young wine): bottled directly after the alcoholic fermentation, it is marketed in its first or second year of life.
- **Crianza**: With a total aging of at least 24 months, of which 6 to 12 must be in oak barrels. The rest of the time it ages in bottle before being labeled and it is marketed in its third year of life.
- **Reserva**: The total aging period should be at least 36 months, with a minimum of 12 months remaining in an oak barrel.
- **Gran Reserva**: only produced when the harvest is considered extraordinary, this category would be destined to wines with a minimum maturation time of 60 months; from which should spend at least 18 in barrels.



And another important fact is, that Rioja Denomination of Origin is divided in three sub-regions: Rioja Alavesa, Rioja Alta and Rioja Baja. Each one of them has its own characteristics that make the wines produced to be totally different.

In this occasion we will visit mainly **Rioja Alavesa subzone**, the nearest area to the beautiful Cantabrian mountain range.



We will spend the night in **Laguardia village**, recently nominated as one of the 44 most beautiful villages in Spain, which soil, underneath, is full of ancient wine caves, still working with the traditional method of producing wine.



DAY 6: Today is the day for the **Wine Harvest Festival** in “Rioja Alavesa” sub-region.

This 2017 the charming village of Yécora will host the Festival.



A sample of grapes from all the villages of the region are brought and put all together in an open barrel, to celebrate the



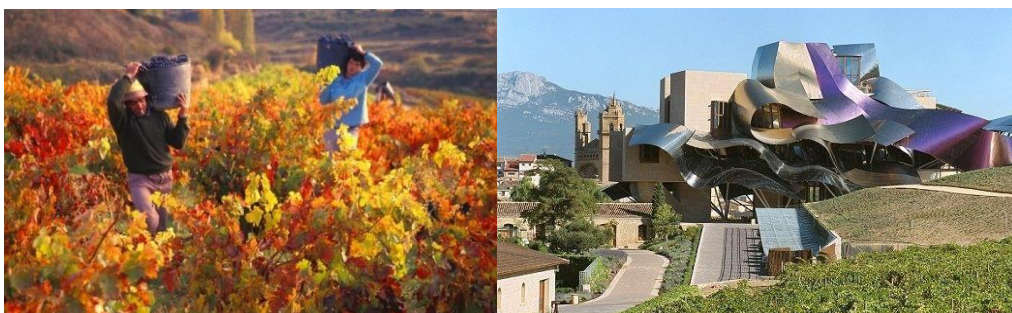
traditional trampled of the grape and tasting of the first grape must.

During this Festival, you could enjoy wines from all the villages, each one in their own marquee, together with traditional gastronomy.

You also can enjoy traditional Basque Music and Dancing performances, together with Rural Sports exhibitions, to complete

a really nice day.

We will also have time to visit a Winery nearby and enjoy the labours of the Harvesting and the fantastic other tones of the Vineyards at this time of the year.



Depending of the flight time we will stay over in Rioja or go directly to Bilbao airport.

Transfer to the Airport and end of the trip.



WINE
ROUTE
RIOJA • ALAVESA

TECHNICAL SHEET



DATES: The trip is available from **12th of September till 15th of October**. Although in this trip is mentioned an specific Wine Harvest Festival, many different are happening within this period, so it could vary depending on the dates selected.

FLIGHTS: The International Airport of Bilbao is the main gate to enter the region. There are no direct flights from India or Dubai to Bilbao, but good daily combinations with the following Airlines:

- KLM via Amsterdam.
- Air France via Paris.
- Lufhansa via Frankfurt.
- British Airways via London.
- Turkish Airlines via Istanbul.

MINIMUM GROUP: 4 people.

PACKAGE INCLUSIONS:

- Transport in a private deluxe van or bus for all the route.
- Transfers Airport – Hotel – Airport.
- Accommodation in 4 star hotels, breakfast included. Category of the hotels can be chosen on demand.
- Entrance to scheduled gastronomic sites.
- Local Travel Guide English spoken.
- Liability Insurance.

PACKAGE EXCLUSIONS:

- Airfare costs.
- Entrance to Museums or other sites not included in the Itinerary.
- Any expenses of personal nature, like tips to driver & guide, cigarettes, laundry, telephone calls, mini bar etc.
- All extra incurred at the Hotel other than mentioned.
- Meals or dinners not mentioned in inclusions
- Airport and Visa taxes.
- Travel Insurance, if it is included in origin.
- Anything not mentioned in inclusions.

TERMS & CONDITIONS OF BOOKING A TOUR:

- The tour can be booked by paying, in the purchase moment, a nonrefundable advance amount of 30% of the tour package. The remaining tour cost will have to be paid at the earliest, but not later than 40 days before the tour date. If guest fails to pay the balance tour cost on time, the company reserves the right to cancel the tour booking and advance will be forfeited.
- After making full payment, In case the person desires to cancel the tour, only 30% amount of the total tour cost will be refunded, provided that the written request for cancellation of the tour has been received by us 21 days prior to the travel date. No refund will be given thereafter.
- Basqvium reserves the right to change itinerary of tours and hotels due to circumstances beyond its control.
- Basqvium is not responsible for any alternate arrangement due flight delay or rescheduling interconnections.
- Any expenses, damages, loss, etc. which may be caused due to weather conditions, strike, curfew, natural calamities, political unrest and unavoidable circumstances beyond our control, will have to be borne by guests.
- Basqvium is not responsible for any death, injury, sickness, accidental, loss, delay increased expenses, damage or theft.

USEFUL INFORMATION

VISA REQUIREMENTS: For Indian citizens is necessary being in possession of a valid passport or travel document and a valid visa, that can be applied in the Spanish Consulates in India. Not necessary for EAU citizens.

[Applications for short-term visas must be submitted](#) through a duly completed application form (original and copy), an established fee must be paid (generally € 60), which shall not be refunded in the event of the application being denied.

Besides that, all the travellers must be in possession of documents that justify the purpose and conditions of the intended stay, and having sufficient means of subsistence for the duration of the intended stay in Spain.

For tourism journeys can be valid the following documents:

- A supporting document from the establishment providing accommodation.
- Confirmation of the booking of an organised trip, indicating the itinerary.
- A return or round-trip ticket.

MONEY: The current currency in all the Basque Region is the Euro. Indian Rupees and other Asian currencies can hardly exchange, so we suggest to bring directly Euros.

In order to accredit economic means, foreigners must prove that they have sufficient means of subsistence available in order to enter Spain. The minimum amount that must be accredited is € 64.53 per person per day, with a minimum of € 580.77 or its legal equivalent in foreign currency.

The use of credit cards is extended for all type of purchases, being the most common ones, VISA and Mastercard.

Traveller's cheques, accompanied by a passport, are also accepted in many hotels, restaurants and shops.

Tax refund for tourists visiting Basque Region: Any tourist or traveller who resides outside the European Union can claim a VAT tax refund for certain purchases.

Purchases must be accompanied by an official invoice, listing each product and the applied tax stated separately. The total amount must exceed 90.15€ (taxes included) per supplier.

The refund does NOT apply to products consumed during your stay, such as food, beverages, bills from restaurants, hotels, etc.



Many retailers have signed up with the Tax Free Shopping Service, which is a program designed to make it easier for tourists to request a VAT refund.

When leaving the European Union, it should be declared and showed the purchases at the Customs desk, along with the Global Refund cheques to be validated.

As there is not a proper Cash Refund office at the Airport of Bilbao, it can be done at any of the international Cash Refund offices around the world or by mailing the "GLOBAL REFUND", cheques stamped by the Customs Officer and the amount will subsequently be paid directly into a bank account. Anyway Spanish airports are incorporating electronic machines called DIVA, in order to substitute the traditional stamping for an electronic validation.

HEALTH: The Basque Health Service – Osakidetza - has an extensive network of health centres and hospitals throughout the country.

For countries with not bilateral agreement, patients will be treated in an emergency, but this treatment will require payment, so a medical insurance would be necessary.

Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed public areas (including public transportation vehicles and buses). It is also not permitted to smoke in health facilities (including outdoor areas that are part of its premises), any educational or training centers (except in outdoor spaces in universities and adult education centres) and playgrounds or play areas (outdoor spaces equipped for children).

VACCINES: To travel to the Basque Region is not necessary to be vaccinated against any disease. As anywhere in the world, it is advisable to have a tetanus shot if you are going to be in contact with nature and the countryside, and have updated the official schedule of vaccinations.

MEDICINES: It is posible to bring a self first aid-kit, but you can find an extensive net of Chemist's all along the route.

LUGGAGE: Travellers may not bring foodstuffs of animal origin for their own consumption into the European Union, as part of their baggage (meats, meat products,

milk and dairy products). The only exceptions, in general terms, are commercially packaged baby formula, and special foods required for medical reasons.

Sums of money in excess of 9,999.99 € must be declared.

Not rigid suitcases are recommended, in order to facilitate its transport in the bus.

Each passenger should be responsible for its own luggage.

CLOTHES: We recommend to bring comfortable and light clothes.

Don't forget a light jacket and raincoat and just in case there is the chance to go to the beach, swimsuit, towel, flip flops and sun cream.

CLIMATE: With regard to climate, the Basque Country is not a homogeneous area. According to climate characteristics, it could be divided into three zones: the Atlantic seaboard, to the north, comprising the Territories of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, as well as the northern part of Araba and Iparralde (French Basque Country) coast, we can find unpredicted rainfalls and mild temperatures; the south (the Ebro basin and Rioja Alavesa), with a dryer climate, hotter in the summer and colder in winter; and an intermediate area covering most of Araba with mixed features.

In general, the weather is mild in the Basque Country. The warm summer temperatures make it possible to enjoy the region's popular beautiful beaches, the mountains, or just the cities without being under a scorching sun. In fact, many tourists from the southern provinces of the Spanish State come to the Basque Country in the summer, in an attempt to flee the heat.

High summer temperatures hover between 23°C and 27°C, although isolated heat waves can be expected. The average temperature is 20°C by the sea and 18°C in Llanada Alavesa. Low temperatures are 12°C to 16°C.

GASTRONOMY: The Basque cuisine is considered as one of the best international cuisines.

Traditional cooking based on the quality of its products and their simple preparation, with roots in public tradition and in which seafood plays a special part, without forgetting tasty meats and local products such as beans, cheese and junket. These and other products complete the extensive repertoire of the traditional gastronomy.

In the seventies, after researching, innovating and extending the repertoire of traditional Basque cooking and after a first contact with French cuisine, a group of young chefs came up with the idea of the so-called New Basque Cuisine, and today some of the leading chefs in this movement are household names.

20 restaurants in the Basque Country are recognized with Michelin Stars.

Speaking of the Basque gastronomy, it would be impossible not to mention the Popular Gastronomic Societies, which can be found all over the region. These masculine redoubts represent a unique phenomenon and maintain the attachment to local culinary traditions very much alive.

And as it has been mentioned before, one of the curiosities of Basque cooking are the "pintxos", small portions served in most bars and restaurants and which represent another opportunity to try the delicacies of this cuisine.



CULTURE: Basques has a distinctive culture with many old traditions in a great variety of fields: music, dancing, sports, gastronomy, etc and spread out in different festivals and events all over the year.

The most distinctive elements of Basque Culture probably are: pintxos, sagardotegis



(cider houses), bertsolaris (like a Basque poetry slam), txokos (usually all-male gastronomy clubs), txalaparta (percussion instrument made of a pair of long wooden boards), Lauburu – the Basque Cross, Euskera – the distinctive Basque language and Basque's peculiar rural sports — wood

chopping, hay bale lifting, hay bale tossing, churn carrying, hole drilling, stone lifting, whale boat racing, wood chopping, grass reaping or sheep fighting.



These Basque sports come from the work that people did on Basque farms, and that work became sport.

ACCOMODATION: the accomodation will be based in 4 stars hotel or similar category in double or twin bedrooms.

An individual use of a room would have an extra charge.

On demand another kind of accomodation can be chosen, like Rural Houses, with extensive presence in all the Basque region, or Small Boutique Hotels.

TOURGUIDE: the tourguide must be in charge of organizing the route, ensuring all the details are fulfilling and explain and inform about historical, cultural or other aspects of the route.

ROUTE: although the aim is to complete the fixed route, last changes can occurred by tourguide criteria or force majeure, for which Basqvium couldn't be responsible.

On the other hand, we will try always to approach to Basque Culture, so in case there is any interesting cultural Basque event on route, we could suggest the group to move up from the schedule program.

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“Imagine a big, powerful Roman general arrives here and someone tells him: ‘See these guys living in the forest? They are Basque. In 2,000 years, they will still talk in their language, but yours will have gone.’”







