

Autumn in the Basque Country

september - october



By: BASQVIUM food, culture & luxury experiences

Autumn in the Basque Country

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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 also fuelled the debate on whether the Basques can boast the oldest European culture.

Anytime is a good time to visit The Land of the Basques, especially in Autumn, when temperatures are still mild and our forest exhibits an incredible palette of colours, together with multiple food markets and cultural activities along the country, it is the right season to experience and enjoy the destination calmly.



After Summer holidays, when days begin to shorten, cities and even rural areas boost activity remarkably. Culture and gastronomy are protagonists of many events along the country.

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Autumn begins with one of the most relevant and international events of the year – [San Sebastian International Film Festival](#). Together with Cannes, Venice and Berlin, form the club of most important Film Festivals in Europe. This is the perfect occasion to meet famous Hollywood and European film stars and to watch more than 200 films along the city.

This year for the 69th edition of the Zinemaldia International Film Festival will award the Premio Donostia prize to the American actor Johnny Depp. And going on with the cultural scene, the iconic Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao celebrates every 18th October its anniversary. And to commemorate 24 years since the inauguration of the museum, like every year, the Guggenheim of Bilbao will open its doors for free.



In fact, although during the whole year you can find a special program of exhibitions and numerous cultural activities, main celebrations occur during the month of October, like the official anniversary gala and diverse events of light, colour and music indoors and outdoors.

Music is very present with the return of the Opera season, Symphonic Orchestra's concerts or some international music events such as the [Getxofolk \(22-26 sept\)](#), [Azkena Rock Festival \(22 sept - 3 oct\)](#), [Donostia Festibala \(24 september\)](#) or the [BIME Rock Festival \(27 - 29 oct\)](#) or the famous [Bilbao BBK Live](#) which this year presents its special autumn edition with up to 18 international and national artists who will be in concert from October 7 to 9 and from November 11 to 13. And it is also the time for the Basque Bertsolari Conquest, a kind of Basque Poetry Slam performed alive, with ancestral roots in the Basque Culture.

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On the other hand, after the main festive summer season, in Autumn, we can still find some important festivities, like Saint Fausto Festivals in the villages of Basauri and Durango, Saint Severino in Balmaseda or Saint Michael and Saint Pilar ´s spread out in different villages.

And it's worth mentioning "Maritxu Kajoi" day in the village of Arrasate, where every first Friday of October its inhabitants dress in black smart suits and dresses to honour the miracle of Maritxu Virgin, when in a crowded town square, from the source from which water always flowed, litres and litres of wine began to sprout!

With these last festivities of October, the main season that started in April turns to the end.

Related to Gastronomy, Autumn is a very remarkable season from the Haute Cuisine to traditional food markets in addition to being Wine Harvest time in Rioja and Txakoli white wine areas.

At the same time, Autumn is the main season for **Street Food Markets**, full of all the seasonal vegetables and fruits, highlighting the one called Urriko Azken Astelehena celebrating in the historical village of Gernika on the last Monday of October.

In the orchards the different varieties of beans are collected, together with aubergines, pumpkins, leeks, carrots, lettuce, onions, squash and all kinds of cabbage (cauliflower, brussels sprouts, broccoli, etc).

But if there is a top product that nature gives us these days, these are mushrooms, fungi and truffles, found in multiple varieties all along our mountains.

The right time to taste these delicatessens is now.

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Fruits such as grapes, apples, pomegranate and some others like blackberries, blueberries and redcurrants come in Autumn, last ones used mainly to make jams. Also, the best moment of the year to enjoy tasting all kinds of nuts such as walnuts or chestnuts.

And undoubtedly among fruits, the main protagonist is the grape. Between September and October, the most important time of the year reaches the Vineyard areas of Rioja and Txakoli, with the **Wine Harvest**.



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It is a process that can last between 30 and 40 days, which means that the collection can arrive well in November.

The process is still done in the traditional way in many of the Vineyards, in which the collected fruit are deposited in wicker baskets that usually have a capacity between 15 and 20 kilos.

Once collected the grape is taken directly to the wineries to begin the process of making red, white and rose wines, following the characteristics of each of them.

Around this season many Festivals are held in all the villages to celebrate the beginning of the harvest, with the first symbolic stepping of the grapes.



And many activities organized by the Wineries, in which visitors can take part in some tasks, such as the winemaking process.

Harvest time is an exceptional moment to learn about the way of life that identifies the people of La Rioja.

A way of knowing their customs and history that have been maintained throughout the years, reaching to the present day being a reference product not only in the Basque Country and Spain, but worldwide.

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It is also the time for harvesting apples which are very appreciated, preserved to produce the local Cider – Euskal Sagardoa, that could be tasted with the beginning of the new year.

It is worth mentioning the protection of this product in the Gipuzkoa jurisdiction, which already in the 11th century, prohibited the introduction of foreign cider, until the local one was consumed. The laws have defended the apple tree, the apple orchard and the cider trade for centuries. Considering apple orchards as a collective wealth in all Basque municipalities.

Last year 3,2 million litres were produced in the Basque Country and this year it seems that production will be excellent, as the apple trees have a lot of fruit!

Today there are 100 cider makers in the Basque Country that offer the chance to eat at the cider house and a chance to try the “txotx” experience, which consists of tasting cider from different barrels with a traditional cider menu. In the cider houses, the season starts in January and ends in mid-May, but some cider houses nowadays open all year round.

As far as fish are concerned, Mackerel, Mullet, Conger, Sardines, Gilthead and Octopus, among others, live their best season in Autumn.

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In the case of Athletic de Bilbao football team's stadium from Bilbao, San Mamés, usually called The Cathedral, it was recognised as the best sports building in the world at the World Architecture Festival in 2015, its modern architecture and integration into the city of Bilbao makes it a special place to enjoy a unique experience.

Related to the traditional Basque Sports, this is the time for the Jai Alai World Tour Final Series. Considered as the fastest ball game in the world, it is a real spectacle to see a game alive! And in October the 4,5 Hand Ball Championship starts with the classification round.

During the first part and almost the whole season, the weather is still good enough to enjoy our mountain range and forest dyed in the beautiful colours of Autumn. That's why still some mountain trekking and mountain bike competitions are held at this time of the year.

As you can see, Autumn is full of traditions and a perfect time to enjoy The Land of the Basques, far from the tourist peak season and a perfect time also to enjoy our seasonal dishes!

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We wait for you!



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TRADITIONS AND FESTIVITIES CALENDAR

From 24.09.2021 to 24.06.2022

MusEkintza Festival - music, dance, humour, cinema and drama shows in museums of Bizkaia
Bilbao, Balmaseda, Muskiz, Bakio, Bermeo, Gernika and Muñatones

24.09.2021

Shepherd's Day. Regional cheese and Shepherd Dogs Contest
Axpe - Atxondo

26.09.2021

Apple Harvest Festival – Cider & Apple Party
Astigarraga

25.06.2021

Saint Pelayo´s Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities
Zarautz

29.09.2021

Saint Michael Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities
Iurreta, Arrasate, Bergara, Eibar

All October

Activities to participate in some tasks during Wine Harvest time, such as the vintage or the winemaking process
Different Riojan and Txakoli Wineries

01.10.2021

Maritxu Kajoi Festivity. Wine Drinkers Day
Arrasate

02.10.2021

Cider Day. Tasting
Eibar

02.10.2021

BIONEKARABA. Organic Products Fair
Vitoria - Gasteiz

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02 - 03.10.2021

Kantauri Fest – Old Vessel Festival and Selfish Open Market
Zierbena Fishing port

03.10.2021

Kilometroak – Leisure Festival in favour of the Basque Language.
Walking Circuit, Music & Gastronomy
Beasain, Lazkao and Ordizia

04.10.2021

First Monday of October Market. The biggest cattle market of the year. Food, Gastronomy & Agro Machinery Exhibition
Gernika

05.10.2021

Cattle Fair and Horse Competition. Cheese Contest. Exhibition of cattle, sheep, machinery, handicrafts, gastronomy and Basque products
Agurain - Salvatierra

07.10.2021

Rosario Virgin Festivity and Pilgrim Begoña Virgin´s Procession of Torches in Bilbao
Gainza, Itsasondo, Oñati

07-15.10.2021

Saint Fausto Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities
Basauri, Durango

10.10.2021

Fair of the kidney bean and vegetables of Araba
Pobes

12.10.2021

Virgin of Pilar Festivity
Azkoitia, Zuia

16.10.2021

Apple Day. Exhibition and sale
Arrasate

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16 - 17.10.2021

Nafarroa Oinez – Leisure Festival in favour of the Basque Language.
Walking Circuit, Music & Gastronomy
Lizarra

17.10.2021

Shepherd's day and Cattle. Basque Cheese Contest
Idiazabal

17.10.2021

Araba's Potatoes Fair
Valdegovia

17.10.2021

Salt Day
Leintz-Latzaga

17.10.2021

Chestnut festival
Apellániz

23.10.2021

Saint Severino Festival. Culture, Gastronomy & Leisure activities,
highlighting the Bean Stew Contest the 23rd
Balmaseda

25.10.2021

Last Monday of October Market. One the biggest open food &
gastronomy markets of the year. Agro Machinery Exhibition
Gernika

30.10.2021

Tolosa Goxua. Sale of pastries
Tolosa

31.10.2021

Ardiki Eguna - Mondeju (sausage) and Aralar Shepherd's Cheese
Contest. Exhibition and sale
Zaldibia

Nearly every weekend

Cattle and local products Fair
Different locations

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[Short video of the big gastronomic market of the last monday of October in Gernika](#)

CULTURAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

Until 26.09.2021

Gextophoto - Festival of photography that bets on the use of formats, supports and unconventional spaces to show the images
Getxo

Until 17.10.2021

Exhibition "Luis Paret in Bilbao. Sacred and Profane Art" - more than 50 works and objects made during the years Paret lived in Bilbao
Fine Arts Museum Bilbao

Until 24.10.2021

Cecilia Bengolea. Animations in Water
Guggenheim Bilbao Museum

Until 01.11.2021

"Alaïa and Balenciaga. Sculptors of shape" Exhibition
Cristobal Balenciaga Museum (Getaria)

Until 03.10.2021

Latinamerican Cinema & Culture Festival - Festival Biarritz Amérique Latine
Biarritz

17 - 25.09.2021

Zinemaldia 2021 - [San Sebastian International Film Festival](#). One of the most important Film Festivals worldwide
San Sebastian

22 - 26.09.2021

Getxo Folk - International Folk Music Festival
Getxo

22.09. - 03.10.2021

Azkena Rock Festival (Special Edition)
Vitoria - Gasteiz

23.09.2021

Bilbao Symphonic Orchestra
Campos Elíseos Theatre

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24.09.2021

"Donostia Festibala" Music Festival
Hippodrome of San Sebastian

24.09.2021

Beasain Festival - Basque Bertsolari Contest (Basque poetry slam alive) with the best of the moment like Maialen Lujanbio and Aitor Sarriegi
Beasain

28.09 - 22.10.2021

BIDEDROMO - International Experimental Film and Video Festival
Bilbao

30.09 - 28.10.2021

International Theatre Festival
Vitoria - Gasteiz

01 - 16.10.2021

SANTURZINE - International Short Film Festival
Santurtzi

01 - 10.10.2021

JA "La Risa de Bilbao" Festival. International Festival of Literature and Art with Humour
Bilbao

02.10.2021

Japan Weekend - the largest pop culture event
Bilbao Exhibition Center

05 - 09.10.2021

DONOSSKINO – Short Film Festival of Donostia
San Sebastián

07-09.10.2021

Bilbao BBK Live Udazkena
Bilbao Arena

08.10.2021

BBK Udazken Soinuak series of concerts - Marwán
Sala BBK Bilbao

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10.10.2021

BBK Udazken Soinuak series of concerts – Anne Lukin
Sala BBK Bilbao

14 - 24.10.2021

BAD. Festival of Theater and Contemporary Dance of Bilbao
Bilbao

15.10.2021

[Open House Bilbao](#) - Architecture and Cultural Festival. 2 days free of charge opening doors of different buildings and spaces that are usually closed to the public
Bilbao

16.10.2021

BBK Udazken Soinuak series of concerts – Los Estanques
Sala BBK Bilbao

18.10.2021

(in tribute to Pablo Picasso's Guernica famous painting) newly added to the museum's collection
Fine Arts Museum Bilbao

22 - 31.10.2021

Zinetika Videodance Festival. The festival hosts proposals of videodance, performance, masterclasses and workshops
San Sebastian, Bilbao and Pamplona

From 22.10.2021 to 27.02.2022

"Women in Abstraction" Exhibit by the Centre Pompidou in Paris
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

27 - 29.10.2021

BIME. Bizkaia International Music Experience
Euskalduna Opera Hall (Bilbao)

30.10.2021

BBK Udazken Soinuak series of concerts - RUFUS T. FIREFLY
Sala BBK Bilbao

31.10.2021

Swan Lake (El Lago de los Cisnes) - Russian National Ballet
Euskalduna Opera Hall (Bilbao)

SPORT ACTIVITY CALENDAR

21.09.2021

La Liga Football League match Athletic de Bilbao – RCD Mallorca
Bilbao

23.09.2021

La Liga Football League match Osasuna – Betis
Pamplona

23.09.2021

Handball match – Feria de San Mateo
Logroño

25.07.2021

La Liga Football League match Alavés – Atlético de Madrid
Vitoria - Gasteiz

25.09.2021

Bizkaia Wood Chopping Championship
Dima

26.09.2021

La Liga Football League match Real Sociedad – Elche CF
San Sebastian

30.09.2021

UEFA Europe Football League Real Sociedad - Monaco
San Sebastián

02.10.2021

WOD Challenge Trail Bilbao 226k
Bilbao

03.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Osasuna – Rayo Vallecano
Pamplona

03.10.2021

Zumaia Flysch Trail 43k
Zumaia

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02.10.2021

WOD Challenge Trail Bilbao 226k
Bilbao

03.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Osasuna – Rayo Vallecano
Pamplona

03.10.2021

Zumaia Flysch Trail 43k
Zumaia

03.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Athletic de Bilbao – Alavés
Bilbao

03.10.2021

Basque Wood Chopping Championship
Sestao

04.10.2021

First match of the 4,5 Handball Championship
Different locations

Best day from 15.10. to 28.02.2022

Punta Galea Challenge - Big Waves Surf Competition
Getxo

17.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Alavés – Betis
Vitoria - Gasteiz

17.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Real Sociedad – RCD Mallorca
San Sebastián

23.10.2021

Bilbao Night Marathon – 42, 21 and 7 kms Running Competition
Bilbao

24.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Osasuna – Granada
Pamplona

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24.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Athletic de Bilbao - Villarreal
Bilbao

27.10.2021

La Liga Football League match Alavés – Elche CF
Vitoria - Gasteiz

31.10.2021

La Liga Football League derby match Real Sociedad - Athletic de Bilbao
San Sebastián

28.10.2021

Cross the three beaches competition. A 10-kilometer journey through the three beaches of San Sebastian
San Sebastián

Nearly every weekend

Basque Rural Sports Exhibitions
Different locations



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