

Summer in the Basque Country

june - july



By: BASQVIUM food, culture & luxury experiences

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Euskal Herria, which literally refers to the land of the Basques in the local language, is a captivating destination that encompasses in a relatively small area a wide variety of landscapes from the sea to the mountain range to modern cities to the more rural.

Located in a mountainous enclave of Atlantic Europe, the land of the Basques is still shrouded in a history of mystery and legend. The origin of this people is uncertain, whose language, Basque, is said to be the oldest language in Europe still spoken to this day and unrelated to any other language spoken in Europe, or even in the world.

The mysterious origins of Basque have fueled debate as to whether the Basques can also boast the oldest culture in Europe. Any time of year is a good time to visit the land of the Basques, but certainly the warm, sunny weather, longer days and shorter nights, along with the plethora of festivals and outdoor activities, make summer the perfect time to explore and enjoy the destination.



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As the days grow longer, summer welcomes a very special celebration: the night of San Juan coinciding with the summer solstice. It is an ancestral celebration linked to multiple purification beliefs, but also to a pagan celebration of witches' night and magic that is celebrated in almost all towns and neighborhoods around a bonfire to scare away evil spirits and thus mark the beginning of summer in a very special way.

Tradition says that you have to write on a piece of paper two wishes for the future and something you want to leave behind in your life, then burn them in the bonfire and jump into the fire at least 3 times to ensure a year of luck and health. The youngest also take the opportunity to throw their school textbooks taking advantage of the end of classes. The most remarkable localities of the sanjuanadas are in Salvatierra, Arrasate-Mondragon, San Sebastian or Tolosa, the latter marked by a diverse spectacle of processions, ancestral dances and more.

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Likewise, every June 24, San Juan de Gaztelugatxe also celebrates a feast of the Saint that gives it its name, with a pilgrimage to which the residents of the town of Bermeo flock with devotion, although hundreds of people also come on foot from nearby towns and even from distant parts of the Basque Country, all attracted by the unique beauty of the landscape. The interest of the place includes the impressive islet, on which rises the small hermitage, which is reached after passing a narrow and steep path of 231 steps and the temple itself. Once there, those who approach the hermitage must ring the chapel bell three times while making a wish.

This is the only day when the chapel is open to the public and the lights on the path are turned on at night, making the day a special moment to enjoy this celebration full of tradition and magic.

Beyond this festival, you can find a multitude of traditional festivals in every corner, every week of the summer, with special mention to the main festivals in the capitals. Likewise, you can find livestock fairs, cider and txakoli days, street markets, festivals and various activities throughout June and July in the Land of the Basques.

One of the most famous, and with a long history, is the Alarde San Marcial in Irun, which is celebrated every year on June 30, remembering the Spanish and French wars. Alarde comes from Arabic, and refers to displays of soldiers and weapons, something that was traditionally done throughout the Middle Ages. This tradition has been respected to this

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day. For this reason, every June 30 the triumph of Irun against a dispute against France in 1522 is commemorated.

The story goes that, during the invasion of the French troops in the city, both the people and the army, all together, went out to defend their town. While some fought, others devised a plan to distract the French enemy, thus managing to attack from the rear and achieve a victory that is celebrated every year in the form of a procession and also in thanksgiving to God.

Here is a [video](#) of how the inhabitants of Irun live the festivities.

Among the capitals, undoubtedly the most popular festival is the world famous San Fermin Festival and its famous Running of the Bulls in the municipality of Iruñea - Pamplona. Every July 6 at 12:00 noon the Festival begins with the txupinazo (chupinazo) from the balcony of the City Hall. This year, after two years of pandemic, will be the first time we can finally see one of the most popular festivals of the year.

From July 6 to 14 there will be 8 days of uninterrupted festivities. To be one more in the Festival, you will have to dress in white with a red scarf. Every day at 8:00 a.m. the most famous event of San Fermin, the running of the bulls, begins. After recite 3 times in front of the statue of San Fermin, 6 wild bulls driven by 6 oxen run through the crowd towards the bullring.

To see it live, it is best to rent a balcony from where you can follow the race. With a route of 875 meters through the narrow streets of the Old Town, the race lasts only about two minutes if no accident occurs.



We leave you here the official [calendar of San Fermes 2023](#), which will be updated little by little.

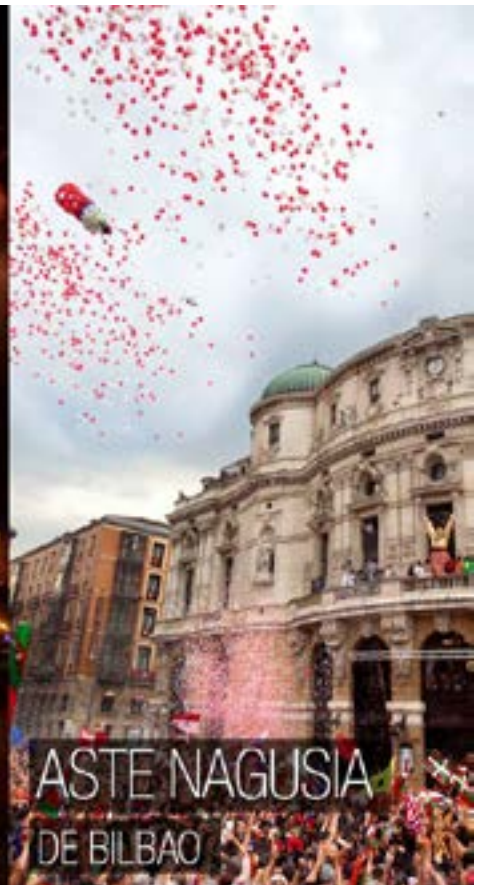
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And the other four capital follow the festive season, starting with the city of Baiona - Bayonne in the French Basque Country, which we can consider a replica of the San Fermin Festivals, with people even wearing in white with red scarfs.



Every year, on July 26 at 22:00 hours the Festival begins, when the Lion King (main character of the Festival) throws the Keys of the City from the balcony of the City Hall. As in Pamplona, the running of the bulls is held through the streets of the city ending on July 30.

The baton is picked up by the administrative capital of the Basque Country - Vitoria-Gasteiz - at the beginning of August, followed by San Sebastian and Bilbao.



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For music lovers it is time to enjoy the biggest music festivals of the year, such as [Getxo Jazz](#) (June 28 - July 2), [BBK Live in Bilbao](#) (July 6 - 8), or the [Vitoria Jazz Festival](#) (July 3 - 8).

Summer is also the time to harvest many of the products that were sown during the spring, such as the famous green peppers from Gernika, different types of red peppers, chilli peppers from Ibarra and tomatoes, all of them distinguished with the Basque Quality Seal - Eusko Label. But it is also the time for pumpkin, cucumber, lettuce, eggplant, parsley and fruits such as melon and cherry that make up the great vegetable panorama of the countryside.



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And the King of the seasonal fishes is undoubtedly Tuna, one of the most appreciated delicacies in the Basque gastronomy.

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

Once the boat is over 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.



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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!



July also marks the end of the season for the elaboration of the delicious Idiazabal cheese, obtained from the native Latxa breed sheep; therefore, it is the last moment to visit one of the farms and enjoy this process live.

On the other hand, if you are a sports fan, it is time for the “Estropadak”, the popular Basque rowing competition.



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Like many of the traditional Basque sports, this specialty comes from a traditional activity. More specifically from the competition between fishermen's boats to reach the shoals of fish or whales first and be the first to return to port, which gave way to bets between them. The season runs from July to September, ending with the spectacular La Concha regatta in San Sebastian, which attracts thousands of fans as it is the most important of the season.

Certainly, the Basques were internationally recognized as some of the best whale fishermen. But now instead of fishing for whales (the last whale catch was in 1901), during the summer season boat trips are organized in the Bay of Biscay for whale and dolphin watching. In fact, in early June, we were able to see dolphins in the estuary between Portugalete and Getxo, one of the most exciting activities for families!



It is also the time when horse racing returns to San Sebastian, available from June to September. Likewise, triathlons and mountain races are held and it is the ideal time for outdoor sports such as hiking, a favorite of the Basques. There are countless routes to choose from, among which are the route of San Román de San Millán (Álava), the Salinas de Añana (Álava), the Salto del Nervión (between Castilla and Euskadi), the beautiful waterfalls of Tobería (Andoain), for the daring we have the Mount Aratz (between Gipuzkoa and Álava), the Sanctuary of Arantzazu (Gipuzkoa), or the route of Elantxobe (Bizkaia).

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[Here is a promotional video about Basque traditions and sports.](#)

As you can see, summer is full of traditions and is a perfect time to enjoy the land of the Basques, although it is the high tourist season, especially in cities like San Sebastian and coastal areas.

And to celebrate that summer has given way to longer and warmer days, here you can see a beautiful [video](#) of the coast of the Basque Country filmed from a drone, made by The Sam Productions.

We wait for you!



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TRADITIONS AND FESTIVITIES CALENDAR

From 21.06. to 06.07.2023

Festivities of Mundaka
Mundaka

Night of 23.06.2023

San Juan Bonfire
All around the country

23 - 29.06.2023

Festivities of San Juan. Cultural, gastronomic and leisure activities
Leioa, Muskiz, Laguardia, Pasaia, Eibar, Arrasate

From 23.06. to 02.07.2023

Festivities of San Pedro
Mungia, Lekeitio, Sopela, Sestao,

24.06.2023

Pilgrimage of San Juan
Bermeo

24.06.2023

Zapato Azule
Ondarroa

25.06.2023

XXV Gorbea Foothills Horse Exhibition
Ondategi

25.06.2023

Txakoli Day
San Sebastián

25-28.06.2023

Festivities of San Pelayo: Cultural, gastronomic and leisure activities
Zarautz

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30.06.2023

Alarde de San Marcial: Parade recalling Spanish and French wars
Irún

01.07.2023

Virgen de la Guía
Portugalete

04.07.2023

San Valentín de Berriotxoa
Festivo en toda Bizkaia

06 - 14.07.2023

San Fermín
Pamplona

Del 14 - 23.07.2023

Festivities of *Carmen*
Santurtzi, Barakaldo, Markina, Amorebieta-Etxano

14.07.2023

Día de la Sardina
Santurtzi

15.07.2023

Alarde del Moro
Antzuola

21-25.07.2023

Festivities of Madalenas
Elantxobe, Bermeo, Arrigorriaga, La Arboleda

25.07.2023

Blusa Day
Vitoria-Gasteiz

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26.07.2023

Sagardo Day
Astigarraga

26 - 30.07.2023

Festivities of Bayona
Bayona

From 22.07. to 01.08.2023

Festivities of San Ignacio
Azpeitia



CULTURAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

21 - 24.06.2023

Festival Lekuz Leku
Bilbao

23 y 25.06.2023

Joaquín Sabina - Concert
Bilbao Exhibition Center BEC

23 - 24.06.2023

BBK Music Legends Fest
Bilbao

19 - 24.06.2023

Bilboko Kalealdia 2023
Bilbao

06 - 08.07.2023

BBK Live Festival
Kobetamendi

03 - 08.07.2023

Festival de Jazz
Vitoria-Gasteiz

21 - 25.07.2023

Jazzaldia: Festival de Jazz
San Sebastián

28.06 - 01.07.2023

Bilbao Blues Festival
Bilbao

07-09.07.2023

Mondra & Roll Festival 2023
Arrasate

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13-16.07.2023

FIB: Festival Internacional de Benicassim 2023
Kobetamendi

22.07.2023

Iron Maiden - Concert
Bizkaia Arena

Every Saturday

Monthly street market
Zarautz

SPORT ACTIVITY CALENDAR

June - September

Horse racing
San Sebastian

24.06.2022

Night Race "La Noche de San Juan" (St. John's Night)
Vitoria-Gasteiz

26.06.2022

Cycle Tourist March Vitoria Trial
Vitoria-Gasteiz

03 - 09.07.2022

Soccer: Donosti Cup
San Sebastián

From 07.07.2022 to 09.07.2022

Mountain race Ehunmilak
Basque Valley Mountains

09 - 10.07.2022

Sailing Regatta
San Sebastián

29.07.2022

San Sebastián Classic
San Sebastián

Every Monday weekly

Galarreta Jai-Alai
Hernani



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