

Winter in the Basque Country
December - January



By: BASQVIUM food, culture & luxury experiences

Winter in the Basque Country

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The Basque Country, or Euskal Herria, is a magical land of contrasts. Nestled between the Atlantic coast and majestic mountains, this region combines ancient traditions with vibrant modern culture. Winter adds a special charm, as the snow graces the peaks, seasonal delicacies fill the table, and towns come alive with festive cheer.

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, even in winter when the cold comes and snow settles on the mountains.



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In the rural tradition of the Basque Country, winter meant the end of the harvest and the coming back of the animal flocks to the farm houses.

Only fishermen dare to go into the sea, when the Cantabric Sea allowed, as in winter there is a wide range of fish in season, being hake one of the most valued.



After the traditional slaughter of pigs and cows in November to provide enough meat for the Winter, the Market of Saint Thomas Day (21st December) marks the beginning of Christmas. In many villages this agricultural and typical products show, brings together the people of the Basque Country in an annual commemoration of the day, when peasants came to the town to pay their taxes and sell their best-quality produce.

Christmas in the Basque Country is heralded by Olentzero, a rather rascally, simple-looking charcoal burner who was the first to hear the good news, and who reminds us of similar characters of pre Christian Europe.

Without forgetting the Three Wise Men Parade that is celebrated every 5th of January.



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Winter is time for some of the most valued and well-known typical dishes too, with preference for stews, as they warm up and are full of flavour, like Porrusalda, made from potatoes, leeks, pumpkin and carrots or the delicious kidney beans, made with love, over a low heat, accompanied always by meat such as ribs, blood sausage, chorizo and pickled green chillies.



But let's not forget about seasonal vegetables, like Artichokes, Endives and Brussels sprouts that can be prepared in countless ways; a wide range of fish in season (Hake, Mackerel, Sea Bream, Sea Bass) to make typical winter creams and soups, to finish with typical winter dessert like Intxaursalsa, a type of custard made with walnuts or carnival fritters, made with stale bread, milk and cinnamon.

And of course after September Harvest, with the beginning of the new year comes time to uncork our delicious Cider – Euskal Sagardoa and Txakoli White Wine.

The first historical reference to Sagardoa (Cider in Basque, that literally means apple wine), dates from more than 1.000 years ago in the surrounding area of San Sebastian.

Nowadays this area still contains the majority of the Cider Houses of the Basque Region, where you can taste the Cider directly from big oak barrels, following the traditional rule of “txotx”.

Perfect time to visit one of the traditional Cider Houses, with their typical menu composed by cod omelette, fried cod with peppers, grilled beef steak and cheese and nuts.

On the other hand, 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.

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And although winter invites to stay longer hours at home, several important Festivals are hold; from Saint Anton Festival in the village of Mungia (18th January) and the San Sebastian day (20th January) where drums conquer the city of San Sebastian for 24 hours, to the Carnivals between February and March, that in case of the “Maskaradak” in the French Basque Country starts in January and lasts till April!



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And if you are keen on sports, the Football League goes on with the regular season with three Basque teams playing La Liga: Athletic of Bilbao, Real Sociedad, and Alavés. That means, every week we will find the chance to see high level matches in our cities. Winter season also is the right time for bike and running competitions.

Related to the traditional Basque sports, this is the season for Basque Hand Ball Double Championship.

And winter also brings us the opportunity find the biggest waves for surfing and for mountain lovers to step the snow in solitary footpaths.

As you can see, winter is full of traditions and perfect time to enjoy The Land of the Basques, far away from the crowds of peak tourist season time.

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We wait for you!



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TRADITIONS AND FESTIVITIES CALENDAR

From 29.11.2024 to 06.01.2025

Gabonetako Azoka
San Sebastian

From 01.12.2024 to 31.12.2024

Basque book and record fair
Hondarribia

From 15.12.2024 to 05.01.2025

Gabonart Christmas Craft Fair. Exhibition and sale of handmade products
Bilbao

21.12.2024

Farmhouse products fair
Hondarribia

21.12.2024

Special Christmas Fair
Tolosa

21.12.2024

St. Thomas Fair - Agricultural and Traditional Products
Bilbao, San Sebastian and other towns

22.12.2024

Santamas Fair
Arrasate

22.12.2024

Gabiltza handicraft market
San Sebastian

22.12.2024

Santamas Fair
Arrasate - Mondragon

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23-24.12.2024

Parade of Olentzero, the Christmas character of the Basque Country (a simple-looking charcoal burner) and Mari Domingi (a simple-looking charcoal burner) and Mari Domingi
Throughout the territory

24.12.2024

Festival of gifts and shepherds' dance
Labastida

24.12.2024

Traditional Bread Day - Agricultural and Traditional Products
Galdames

24.12.2024

Special Christmas Fair
Ordizia

24.12.2024

Christmas Eve
All the territory

25.12.2024

Christmas Day
All territory

26.12.2024

Zoroperi Day
Zestoa

27.12.2024

Christmas Fair
Ordizia

31.12.2024

New Year's Eve Festivity
Throughout the territory

01.01.2025

New Year's Day
Throughout the territory

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05.01.2025

Three Kings Parade
Throughout the territory

06.01.2025

Epiphany of the Lord
Throughout the territory

07.01.2025

New Year's Market
Deba

08.01.2025

Market of the "burrito" (Astotxo azoka)
Lazkao

12.01.2025

Maskaradak
Lakarri

15.01.2025

Farmers' market
Sestao

15.01.2025

Start of the cider season
Astigarraga

17.01.2025

San Anton Day - Uncorking of the new Txakoli harvest
Getaria

17.01.2025

Saint Anton's Day
Amurrio

18.01.2025

San Antón Fair - Traditional and agricultural products
Mungia

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From 17.01.2025 to 26.01.2025

Festivities of San Vicente
Barakaldo

19.01.2025

Maskaradak
Zalgize

20.01.2025

Tamborrada of San Sebastian. 24-hour drum parade with gastronomy and gastronomy and leisure activities.
San Sebastian

21-22.01.2025

Revolcón del Katxi
Oyón

22.01.2025

Cider Day
Zarautz

25.01.2025

Maskaradak
Larraine

From 26.01.2025 to 30.01.2025

Leitza Carnival
Leitza

27-28.01.2025

Rural and Ethnic Carnivals
Ituren and Zubieta

From 31.01.2025 to 01.02.2025

Sunbilla Carnivals
Sunbilla

Every Saturday

Street market
Irun

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[Short video of the San Sebastian Day - Drum Parade](#)

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CULTURAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

Throughout December

Christmas Choral Concerts
Church of the Good Shepherd - Bilbao

From 01.12.2024 to 07.01.2025

Nativity Scenes Exhibition
Different places in Bilbao

From 05.12.2024 to 29.12.2024

Chicago, the Musical
Arriaga Antzokia Theater

From 14.12.2024 to 05.01.2025

PIN - Children's Christmas Park
Bilbao Exhibition Center (BEC)

21.12.2024

Bonberenea Christmas Txaranga 2024
Tolosa

23.12.2024

Izaro
Kursaal Donostia

24.12.2024

Christmas Choir
San Sebastian

From 26.12.2024 to 28.12.2024

DONOSTEAM. Technology Fair
San Sebastian

27.12.2024

Marie de Jongh Theater: Mr. Bo
Oiartzun

28.12.2024

Rozalén
Bilbao Arena Miribilla

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28.12.2024

Zea Mays
Legorreta

28.12.2024

Christmas carols contest
Rentería

From 28.12.2024 to 21.02.2025

Negufest
Bilbao, Getxo and Ermua

04.01.2025

Great New Year's Concert by Johan Strauss
Euskalduna Palace - Bilbao

10.01.2025

Judeline
Santana 27 - Bilbao

10.01.2025

Txalaparta
Amorebieta-Etxano

17.01.2025

Leo Rizzi
Stage Live Bilbao

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SPORT ACTIVITY PROGRAM

22.12.2024

CA Osasuna - Athletic Club
El Sadar Stadium

25.12.2024

Gabon Kontxapuzon
San Sebastian

27.12.2024

Ski-lifting championship in pairs
Galarreta Fronton (Hernani)

31.12.2024

San Silvestre
All the Basque Country

12.01.2025

Athletic Club - Real Madrid
San Mames

12.01.2025

Real Sociedad - Villarreal CF
Reale Arena

19.01.2025

CA Osasuna - Rayo Vallecano
El Sadar Stadium

26.01.2025

Athletic Club - CD Leganés
San Mamés

26.01.2025

Deportivo Alavés - RC Celta
Mendizorroza

26.01.2025

Real Sociedad - Getafe CF
Reale Arena

30.01.2025

Real Sociedad - PAOK
Reale Arena - San Sebastian

30.01.2025

Athletic Club - Viktoria Plzen
San Mames - Bilbao

From December to February, every Monday

"Eusko Label Winter Series - Jai Alai
Bilbao, San Sebastian, Pamplona, Durango, Gernika, Eibar and more

From December to March, every weekend

Pelota Mano Pairs Championship
Bilbao, San Sebastian, Pamplona, Durango, Gernika, Eibar and more

Almost every weekend

Basque Rural Sports
Different locations





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