

Winter in the Basque Country

December - January



By: BASQVIUM food, culture & luxury experiences

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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, 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. This year, Athletic is also competing in the UEFA Champions League, adding extra excitement on the weeks when European matches take place. That means we will still find the chance to enjoy high-level football almost every week in our cities. Winter season is also 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 05.12.2025 until 05.01.2026

Gabonart Christmas Artisan Fair. Exhibition and sale of handicraft products
Bilbao

21.12.2025

Saint Thomas Fair - Agricultural and Traditional Products
Bilbao and San Sebastian

22.12.2025

Santamas Fair - Agricultural and Traditional Products
Arrasate - Mondragón

23.12.2025

Parade of Olentzero, the Christmas character of the Basque Country (a simple-looking charcoal burner)
All around the country

24.12.2025

Festival of gifts and shepherds' dance
Labastida

24.12.2025

Traditional Bread Day - Agricultural and Traditional Products
Galdames

24.12.2025

Christmas Fair
Oridizia

24.12.2025

Christmas Eve
All around the country

25.12.2025

Christmas day
All around the country

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26.12.2025

Zoroperi day
Zestoa

31.12.2025

New Year's Eve Festivity
All around the country

01.01.2026

New Year day
All around the country

03.01.2026

New Year's Market
Deba

05.01.2026

Three wise men Parade
All around the country

06.01.2026

Epiphany of the Lord
All around the country

11.01.2026

"Little Donkey" Market
Lazkao

15.01.2026

Agricultural market
Sestao

16.01.2026

Beginning of the cider season
Astigarraga

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17.01.2026

San Antón Day - Txakoli Harvest Launching
Getaria

18.01.2026

San Antón Fair - Traditional and Agricultural Products
Mungia

18.01.2026

Beginning of the Maskaradak, the ancient and traditional Carnival
Festival of Carnival in Zuberoa
Pagola

20.01.2026

San Sebastian's Day. 24-hour drum parade with gastronomy and
leisure activities
San Sebastian

22.01.2026

Cider day
Zarautz

25.01.2026

Festivities of San Vicente. Culture, gastronomy and leisure activities
Barakaldo

27.01.2026

Second performance for Maskaradak
Ezpeize

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

CULTURAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM

During December

Christmas Choral Concerts
Church of the Good Shepherd - Bilbao

From 26.11.2025 to 06.01.2026

Nativity Scene Exhibition
Different places of Bilbao

From 13.12.2025 to 05.01.2026

PIN - Children Christmas park
Bilbao Exhibition Center (BEC)

22.12.2025

Chicago Mass Choir "Sweet Home Chicago"
Arriaga Theatre - Bilbao

23.12.2025

The Wizard of Oz. The Musical
Euskalduna Palace - Bilbao

23.12.2025

Eñaut Elorrieta (acústico) - Concert
Bilbao

25.12.2025

Festival Santos Pascuas 2025: BIZARDUNAK
Pamplona

26.12.2025

MIKEL URDANGARIN: "Mundua eder" - Concert
Donostia-San Sebastian

26.12.2025

International classical ballet: 'The Nutcracker'
Baluarte Auditorium - Pamplona-Iruña

27.12.2025

Olaia Iziarte - Concert
Donostia San Sebastian

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29.12.2025

James Rhodes - Concert

Baluart Auditorium - Pamplona-Iruña

01.01.2026

Gabon Giroan 2025-2026: Olagain Txistulari Elkarte

Andoain

02.01.2026

ABBA Tribute - Masters Of Scene

Donostia San Sebastian

03.01.2026

Amaia - Concert

Pamplona - Iruña

05.01.2026

SU TA GAR - Concert

Vitoria Gasteiz

07.01.2026

Gran Concierto de Año Nuevo: Strauss Festival Orchestra

Bilbao

09.01.2026

Fito y los Fitipaldis - Concert

Bilbao

10.01.2026

CANDLELIGHT Bilbao: "Vivaldi y Las Cuatro Estaciones"

Bilbao

13.01.2026

Euskadiko Orkestra: "Arriaga / Strauss"- Concert

Bilbao

SPORT ACTIVITY PROGRAM

22.12.2025

Athletic Club Bilbao - RCD Espanyol
San Mames - Bilbao

24.12.2025

Belatxikieta Climb
Amorebieta

27.12.2025

Kosner Baskonia - San Pablo Burgos
Buesa Arena - Vitoria-Gasteiz

28.12.2025

Bilbao Basket - Barça
Bilbao Arena - Bilbao

30.12.2025

Final of the championship of Remonte by couples
Galarreta fronton

31.12.2026

Saint Sylvester race
Beasain, Bilbao, Galdakao, Rekalde, San Sebastian, Sodupe, Vitoria - Gasteiz

02.01.2026

Kosner Baskonia - Fenerbahce
Buesa Arena - Vitoria-Gasteiz

02.01.2026

Bilbao Basket - Valencia
Bilbao Arena - Bilbao

04.01.2026

Real Sociedad - Atlético de Madrid
Anoeta - Donostia - San Sebastián

04.01.2026

Kosner Baskonia - Morabanc Andorra
Buesa Arena - Vitoria-Gasteiz

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04.01.2026

Deportivo Alavés - Real Oviedo
Estadio Mendizorroza - Vitoria - Gasteiz

09.01.2026

Kosner Baskonia - Asvel
Buesa Arena - Vitoria-Gasteiz

10.01.2026

Bilbao Basket - Murcia
Bilbao Arena - Bilbao

18.01.2026

Real Sociedad - F.C. Barcelona
SAnoeta - Donostia - San Sebastián

18.01.2026

Saski Baskonia - Baxi Manresa
Buesa Arena - Vitoria-Gasteiz

From December to February, every monday

Eusko Label Winter Series
Bilbao, San Sebastian, Pamplona, Durango, Gernika, Eibar and more

From December to March, every weekend

Eskupilota (basque hand ball) couple championship
Bilbao, San Sebastian, Pamplona, Durango, Gernika, Eibar y más

Nearly every weekend

Basque Rural Sports Exhibition
Different locations



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