

CULTURAL WALKING ADVENTURE

Basque

San Sebastian, Bilbao & Pyrenees



CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Perched Villages, Sandy Beaches & Guggenheim

A museum sheathed in titanium. Wild horses that eat baguettes. Villages with names in three languages—Basque, French and Spanish. Every time we venture onto the gentle western slopes of the Pyrénées, the richness of Europe's oldest culture surprises us again. Farmers on tractors yield the right of way to fierce but friendly pelota games in village squares. Garlands of brilliant red pimientos dry in the sunlight...then show up on a dinner plate stuffed with seafood. This region may well have more festival and market days per person than anywhere else in Europe, and we're always happy to change plans and join in. Experience France and Spain, going from the scenic green meadows of the Jaizquibel to medieval market towns to the dramatic Guggenheim museum you've heard so much about, exploring on foot with our local Basque guide.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- All breakfasts and 5 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to tastings, historic sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ INVISIBLE CHECK-IN

When your group arrives, we whisk you and your bags to your room immediately. No waiting – no tipping.

→ WINE ON US

In many regions, we uncork wonderful local wines at every dinner, compliments of Classic Journeys.

→ PERFECT PAIRINGS DINNERS

A special dinner prepared by one of our favorite chefs with a procession of wines tailored to each course.

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

Terrain

Easy to moderate on good trails. At your option, up to 2 to 4 hours of walking per day, always with van support.

DAY 1 »

Saint-Jean-de-Luz

Just twelve miles south of glamorous Biarritz, Saint Jean is one of the most attractive towns on the Basque coast. It is also an active fishing port, noted for its tuna, sardines and anchovies. Most guests fly into Paris and take the TGV high speed train that runs directly to Saint-Jean-de-Luz. We meet here at our hotel and take an afternoon walk around the town.

In Saint Jean, our walk takes us past the homes of the old quarter, including Maison Louis XIV. This was the temporary residence of the Sun King in 1660, when he came to Saint Jean for his marriage to Maria Theresa, the Infanta Castile. Saint Jean Baptiste, the nearby church where Maria Theresa and the king were married, is the largest French Basque church, with huge oak galleries reached by wrought iron staircases.

MEALS: D OVERNIGHT: SAINT-JEAN-DE-LUZ

DAY 3 »

Bidarray

On our morning walk through the countryside, we visit a local farmer and are invited to see how he makes sheep's milk cheese, followed by a tasting. We continue on foot across picturesque vineyards, breaking for a picnic of local specialties and wines.

In the afternoon, we visit one of the vineyards for a tasting of Basque wines before returning to Bidarray.

MEALS: B, D OVERNIGHT: BIDARRAY

DAY 4 »

Ustaritz / Bayonne

A beautiful walk this morning leads us from Ustaritz, the first capital of the province, to Bayonne. During our walk along an historic towpath, we will view the magnificent wildlife and farmland of the riverbank area. As we approach Bayonne, we have the opportunity to explore the towers of a 13th century Gothic church. Our walk culminates in the medieval city of Bayonne, with lovely houses boasting bright blue, red and green shutters.

We'll enjoy lunch in Bayonne. After finishing our walk in the mid-afternoon, we leave the Lower Navarra for the Guipuzcoa and three nights in San Sebastián.

On our way to San Sebastián, we see how Basques have lived for centuries and how many still live in isolated homesteads of fewer than 30 people. Many Basques living along the coast became expert shipbuilders and seafarers. As early as the 14th and 15th centuries, Basques were venturing as far as Greenland and Newfoundland on whaling and fishing expeditions. This, along with their seafaring nature and their desire to avoid central control, meant that they lived in freedom while many of their European brethren lived in serfdom. By the 15th century, these individual freedoms were enshrined in fueros, a body of ancient laws and privileges that were protected until well into the 19th century.

Tonight, our guide leads us on a walk into town for dinner.

MEALS: B, D OVERNIGHT: SAN SEBASTIÁN

DAY 5 »

San Sebastian

Our last three nights we are guests at one of the best hotels in the center of the seaside town of San Sebastián. Originally erected in 1865, Hotel de Londres accommodated Queen Isabella II during her exile and shortly thereafter transformed into a palace-hotel. It has since gained fame for its Casino and magnificent location on the scallop-shaped La Concha bay. During our stay we relax in the hotel's luxury, perhaps linger on the terrace overlooking the bay, and use it as a base for our last three days exploring the Spanish coast.

Mid-morning, we explore town, learning about its mix of architectural styles. San Sebastián is in many ways more French than Spanish; or at least the most French of Spanish cities. Its shops serve excellent croissants, it was the only city in Spain without a bullring for many years, and its climate is more Atlantic than Mediterranean. Three mountains, Mt. Urgull, Mt. Igeldo and Mt. Ulia rise on either side of town and protect it from all northerly winds, making it very temperate. We walk along the beautiful Concha Bay, stopping in the old part of town for a lunch of tapas, or pintxos as they're called in Basque. Continuing on to the top of Monte Igeldo, we enjoy the most spectacular views of the town and the sea. You can enjoy some time on your own or with our guide exploring the town this afternoon.

MEALS: B OVERNIGHT: SAN SEBASTIÁN

DAY 6 »

San Sebastián / Jaizkibel

A Spanish saying has it that "in the summer, the rich go south and the wise go north." The northern coast offers intensely green rolling hills, lush valleys and meadows, wave battered cliffs and isolated sandy stretches of remote, beautiful beaches. This morning, you can choose to relax at the hotel, go for a swim – enjoy some time on your own or with our guide.

After lunch, we walk in the hills above and around San Sebastián, with beautiful views of the river on the Spanish side of the border and the French Basque countryside on the other. Our afternoon walk starts mid-range to the top of Jaizkibel. We will then have a guided exploration of Hondarribia, including the old town with its cobblestone streets, charming houses and fishing port. Our last evening together, we enjoy a special degustation dinner as we get to sample a variety of the chef's signature dishes.

MEALS: B, D OVERNIGHT: SAN SEBASTIÁN

DAY 7 »

Bilbao

This morning, we venture along the northern coast of Spain to Bilbao to see one of Europe's greatest new architectural treasures. The Guggenheim—a museum that many say is so spectacular you can visit it for the architecture alone—is the highlight of our final day together. Opened in 1997, it was designed by noted California architect Frank O. Gehry using cutting edge computer technology to wed architectural tradition with futuristic fancy. Of course, the museum is not the only reason to visit Bilbao. As the capital of the Basque region, it has a fascinating old quarter and some of the best food in Spain.

We part company in Bilbao in the early afternoon. Here, you may catch a train to Madrid, or if you prefer, you can continue with our guide and van to Biarritz for trains to Paris. Biarritz is a lovely seaside town that became popular in the mid 19th century when the Spanish born Empress Eugénie—wife of Napoléon III whom she met here—brought the entire royal court of the Second Empire to what had been her favorite childhood seaside town.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



[Madison Hotel](#)

Located in the heart of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, just a few steps from the beach, the historic hotel offers elegant modern rooms combined with traditional Basque charm.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



[Ostape](#)

A cluster of Basque-style farmhouses on a hilly estate, this unique property in the Navarre region offers the comforts of a 5-star hotel. Each suite blends classic and contemporary design. The heated outdoor pool overlooks pastures dotted with sheep.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



[Hotel De Londres Y De Inglaterra](#)

With its location on La Concha Bay, this grand beachfront hotel is the perfect spot to enjoy vibrant San Sebastián. Built in 1865 and lovingly renovated, the rooms blend romantic touches with modern amenities and have views of the wide beach and the sea.

NIGHTS: 3 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Lobby of Hotel Madison**
START CITY: **Saint Jean-de-Luz**
START TIME: **3:00 PM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Downtown city center**
END CITY: **Bilbao**
END TIME: **1:00 PM**