

CLASSIC JOURNEYS

THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



Basque

San Sebastian, Bilbao & Pyrenees



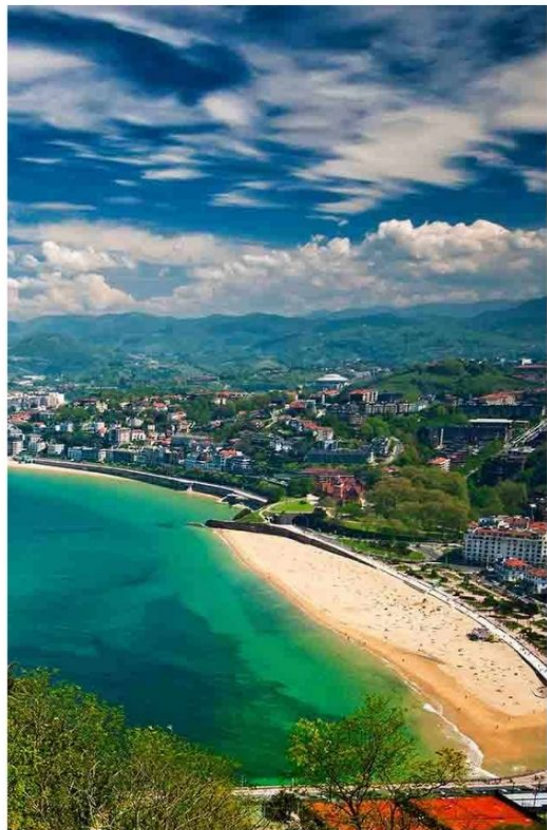
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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Perched Villages, Sandy Beaches & Guggenheim

Discover the captivating blend of ancient traditions and stunning landscapes in the Basque Pyrenees, where rugged mountains meet the azure waters of the Bay of Biscay. Famous for its unique culture, language, and culinary delights, this region offers an unparalleled walking experience that seamlessly combines coastal paths, verdant countryside, and mountain trails. Classic Journeys has crafted a unique adventure that allows you to be inspired by the Camino de Santiago without the challenges of a full pilgrimage. Using perfectly-sited boutique hotels as your base, you'll access scenic sections of this ancient route, guided by local experts who bring centuries of history to life. As you wander through this enchanting region, the charming architecture and mountain vistas might evoke images of rural France, but the pintxos bars and vibrant local traditions remind you of Spain's rich heritage. Throughout your journey, meet the fascinating locals who have preserved Basque culture in this borderland—winemakers, artisans, farmers, and cheesemakers—each contributing to the vibrant tapestry of Basque life. From the iconic Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao to hidden culinary gems in San Sebastián, immerse yourself in a world where ancient pilgrim routes lead to exclusive encounters with welcoming locals you'd never meet on your own.



DAY 1 »

Saint-Jean-de-Luz

- Explore the charming cobblestone streets of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, discovering its maritime history.
- Savor local Basque pintxos at a picturesque café, immersing yourself in the region's cuisine.

Begin your Basque adventure in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, a picturesque coastal town in southwestern France. Here, your expert local guide introduces you to the truly unique Basque region, which straddles the border between France and Spain. This distinct cultural area has its own language, traditions, and a strong sense of identity, divided politically between three provinces in France and four in Spain. Despite this division over two countries and a beautifully wide variety of terrain, the Basque people have maintained a cohesive cultural unity and a rich heritage that your guide illuminates as you stroll through the narrow cobblestone streets. Discover the town's maritime history, including its 17th-century golden age and the royal wedding of Louis XIV in 1660, while admiring the charming Basque architecture adorned with distinctive red and green shutters.

From the lively harbor, once home to a significant whaling fleet, your walk ends at the picturesque Place Louis XIV, surrounded by impressive 17th-century houses. Here you start to get an exposure to culture through cuisine, as you relax at a café and savor a sampling of local Basque pintxos (a sort of Basque equivalent to tapas in Spain). Throughout the week, a real benefit of expert local guides is eating like (and with) the locals. Think of it as the most delicious master class as your guide explains with each meal how Basque gastronomy reflects the region's unique position between mountains and sea while preserving its vibrant culture.

MEALS: D

OVERNIGHT: SAINT-JEAN-DE-LUZ

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

DAY 2 »

Itxassou to Espelette / Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port

- Walk through the lush Basque countryside along the La Nive River, taking in panoramic views.
- Experience an exclusive pepper tasting in Espelette, learning about local farming traditions.

Embark on an invigorating walk from Itxassou, following the picturesque La Nive River. This stunning trail takes you through the lush Basque countryside, offering panoramic views of the Pyrenees and the river valley carved out over millennia. As you walk, your guide points out native flora and fauna, explaining their significance in Basque culture and cuisine. You'll see how the river has shaped the fertile landscape, supporting traditional Basque farming communities and diverse wildlife. The terrain is moderate, with some uphill sections rewarded by breathtaking vistas. Listen for the tinkling of sheep bells and the calls of local birds as you make your way through this pastoral landscape.

After lunch in the picturesque village of Espelette, famous for its red peppers, enjoy an exclusive 'only with Classic Journeys' pepper tasting experience. A local farmer guides you through their pepper fields, explaining the cultivation process and the peppers' cultural significance. Later, walk a section of the ancient pilgrim route into Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, a key stop on the Camino de Santiago. Feel the centuries of history beneath your feet as you enter this medieval town. Cap off the day by joining the locals in town cheer for their favorite players in an exhilarating Pelota match, a sport deeply ingrained in Basque culture. We often meet some of the players afterward, offering a unique opportunity to learn about this traditional sport from those who play it passionately.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: BIDARRAY

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

DAY 3 »

Irouleguy / Saint-Étienne-de-Baïgorry

- Stroll through Irouleguy's vineyards, learning about the unique terroir and wine-making practices.
- Taste artisanal cheeses at a traditional farmstead, connecting with local dairy culture.

Begin your day with a scenic walk across the vineyards of Irouleguy. The gentle slopes and well-maintained paths provide an easy stroll through this renowned wine region. Your guide shares insights about the unique terroir that makes Irouleguy wines so special. As you walk, you'll learn about the traditional grape varieties and sustainable farming practices used in this AOC region. Your destination is a charming local church where you'll enjoy a picnic lunch overlooking the vineyards. The picnic, prepared just for you using seasonal ingredients, pairs perfectly with the local Irouleguy wines.

This afternoon, set off on a picturesque walk from Saint-Étienne-de-Baïgorry through the verdant Basque countryside. Enjoy stunning views of sheep grazing on the rolling hills as you make your way to a traditional farmstead. Here, meet our longtime friend, Michele, who is the owner, farmer, and cheese maker.

He welcomes you with a delicious tasting of artisanal cheeses, including the renowned Basque sheep's milk cheeses. Michele explains the traditional methods of cheese-making, including the use of raw, unpasteurized milk, which contributes to the cheese's distinctive flavors. This intimate experience allows you to connect with the local culture and understand the passion behind Basque dairy production Getaria, which has been a part of the region's heritage for centuries.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: BIDARRAY

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

DAY 4 »

Uliako Labea / San Sebastian

- Follow the historic Camino de Santiago, immersing yourself in natural beauty and cultural significance.
- Discover San Sebastian's surfing culture at a local surfboard shaper's workshop.

Start your day with an inspiring walk along a section of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. This historic pilgrimage route leads you to an organic bakery. As you follow the well-marked path, your guide shares stories and anecdotes of pilgrims who have walked these trails for centuries. The route offers a mix of natural beauty and cultural significance, passing through fragrant pine forests and offering jaw-dropping views of the coastline. This walk allows you to immerse yourself in the Basque countryside while following in the footsteps of countless pilgrims. Midday, stop for lunch featuring organic, locally-sourced ingredients that reflect the area's commitment to sustainable agriculture.

Fueled, continue your walk into San Sebastian. This coastal path offers stunning views of the Bay of Biscay and passes through charming neighborhoods. Make a unique stop at a local surfboard shaper's workshop, where you'll learn about San Sebastian's surfing culture and the craftsmanship behind custom surfboards. The walk concludes as you enter San Sebastian on foot, feeling a sense of accomplishment as you arrive at your boutique hotel. In the evening, join a local food expert for a pintxos tour in San Sebastian's old town, sampling these delicious Basque tapas at some of the city's best bars, many of which are hidden gems known only to locals.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: SAN SEBASTIÁN

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

DAY 5 »

Camino de Santiago vineyards / San Sebastian

- Hike along the Camino de Santiago Por Euskado, enjoying breathtaking sea views and quaint villages.
- Descend into San Sebastian, exploring its history and architecture from a hilltop viewpoint.

Begin with a short drive along the coast toward Getaria and a walk along the Camino de Santiago Por Euskado. This coastal section of the pilgrim trail offers breathtaking sea views and passes through quaint Basque villages. The terrain is varied, with some gentle climbs and descents. Your efforts are rewarded as you arrive on foot at a beautiful local winery. Joining you for a walk through the vineyards, the winemaker explains how the area's microclimate and soil contribute to the wine's distinctive character. A wine tasting and lunch follows, where you'll learn about the unique Txakoli wine of the region.

After lunch, a short drive takes you to the hilltop viewpoint of Leku-Eder, overlooking San Sebastian. From here, enjoy a downhill walk into the city, taking in panoramic views of the bay and the old town. The path is well-maintained and offers an easy descent into the heart of San Sebastian. Your guide points out significant landmarks and shares stories about the city's transformation from a royal resort to a culinary capital. As you walk, you gain insights into the city's history, architecture, and cultural significance.

Tonight, you have dinner on your own, and perhaps the coastal walk has inspired you to enjoy a seafood dinner at a traditional Basque restaurant, where you savor the catch of the day prepared in the local style.

MEALS: B, L

OVERNIGHT: SAN SEBASTIÁN

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

DAY 6 »

Jaizkibel / Hondarribia

- Ascend to the Jaizubia watchtower, taking in panoramic views of diverse landscapes.
- Explore the charming medieval town of Hondarribia, discovering local artisans and crafts.

Set out on an invigorating walk from the Sanctuary of Guadalupe to Saint Barbara watchtower in Jaizkibe. This trail takes you through beautifully diverse landscapes, from lush forests to open meadows, with the Pyrenees as a backdrop. As you ascend, you'll be treated to panoramic views that stretch from Spain to France, offering postcard-worthy views of the Bidasoa River, which forms part of the natural border between the two countries. Spot native plants and wildlife, knowing that you have your well-connected friend in your guide by your side to explain their ecological importance. The moderate climb not only leads to the watchtower, it's well worth it for the breathtaking vistas of the coastline and surrounding mountains.

Spend time exploring the charming town of Hondarribia, a picturesque medieval settlement situated on the Bidasoa Estuary. As you wander through its cobbled streets, you'll discover two distinct areas: the Old Town (Casco Viejo) with its impressive medieval buildings, and the colorful Fisherman's Quarter known for its excellent restaurants. Your guide introduces you to local artisans, giving you a chance to see traditional Basque crafts in action. From the esplanade, enjoy views across the estuary to Hendaye in France, emphasizing Hondarribia's unique position as a border town.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: SAN SEBASTIÁN

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

DAY 7 »

Bilbao

- Visit the iconic Guggenheim Museum, marveling at its revolutionary architecture and art collection.
- Walk through Bilbao's transformed riverfront, witnessing the city's cultural rebirth.

You conclude your Basque adventure with a visit to the iconic Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. On an urban walk through Bilbao's transformed riverfront area to the museum, you see firsthand the city's remarkable journey from an industrial center to cultural hub. Your guide shares how the Guggenheim's construction catalyzed the city's regeneration. Marvel at the building's revolutionary architecture and explore its world-class collection of modern and contemporary art.

MEALS: B

DAILY MILEAGE OPTIONS: SEE CURATED WALKS CHART

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

Curated Walks

CONNECT. ON FOOT. AT EYE LEVEL.

Join us to walk the most cinematic footpaths in a region. With thoughtfully curated walks that are about so much more than just counting miles. Yes, it's likely that your Fitbit or Apple watch will buzz when you hit your step count. But you probably won't notice because your soul will be buzzing from the connections you make with the people and place. Each day, we'll offer you one or two walks. Each walk is generally between an hour or two in duration. And our support vehicles are often nearby and add to your flexibility. Choose one or both to curate the right amount of walking for you each day. It's why Forbes magazine calls our tours their 'Luxury Walking Favorite'.

CURATE YOUR OWN MILEAGE OPTIONS EACH DAY

	MINIMUM	AVERAGE	MAXIMUM
Day 1	1	2	2
Day 2	3	6	9
Day 3	3	7	9
Day 4	1	3	6
Day 5	4	6	9
Day 6	3	6	8
Day 7	2	2	2

*No scheduled walks

ROUTE NOTES

The terrain on this trip includes a mix of paved and cobblestone streets in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Hondarribia, Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port and San Sebastian, as well as well-maintained countryside and coastal trails, vineyard, olive grove and shepherds' paths of compressed dirt and stone. The footpaths offer a selection of level, rolling and hilly terrain with some elevation gain and loss.

THE ART OF THE UNPLANNED:

CRAFTING UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

We've carefully crafted each day's walking adventures with our expert local guides. Your daily itinerary serves as a well-thought-out plan, and we empower our tour leaders to adapt to unexpected opportunities or challenges. Whether it's an impromptu local invitation or a weather-related change, we're adept at making adjustments. So, while your experience may closely follow the itinerary, it might also include some variations. In essence, we invite you to "expect the unexpected" – knowing that our promise is to provide you the most genuine and authentic walking tours in the world.

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

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

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

LOCATION: Downtown city center
CITY: Bilbao, Spain
TIME: 1:00 PM
Optional transfer to Biarritz, France with arrival at approximately 4:00 PM.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ▶ **CURATED WALKS THAT LEAD TO 'ONLY WITH CLASSIC JOURNEYS' EXPERIENCES**
 - Immerse and connect you across cultures as you explore on foot
- ▶ **EXCEPTIONAL LOCAL GUIDES**
 - Bring authentic experiences to life
- ▶ **ENCHANTING ACCOMMODATIONS**
 - Where luxury and local mean you feel at home
- ▶ **EAT LIKE (& WITH) THE LOCALS**
 - Local flavors and time to savor the moments together
- ▶ **SMALL GROUPS, GUARANTEED**
 - Mean deeper, richer experiences while making friends along the way
- ▶ **REGENERATIVE TRAVEL**
 - We take strides to preserve cultures, traditions, and nature

What's Included

- Accommodations for 6 nights
- 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.
- ▶ **WINE ON US**
In many regions, we uncork wonderful local wines at every dinner on us.
- ▶ **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.

Enhancing Your Journey

We're constantly seeking ways to improve your experience. Count on us to update you with any significant changes before departure. Minor adjustments may be communicated by your guides during the trip to ensure you have the best possible journey.