



## SPAIN

# GRAND TOUR OF BASQUE COUNTRY - SELF-DRIVE (TOUR CODE: 13770)

### STARTS AND ENDS

Bilbao to  
Madrid

### TRAVEL PERIODS

01 Jan 24 - 20 Dec 24

### EXPERIENCE

Cultural  
Self-Drive

### TRAVEL STYLE

Independent Holiday Packages

Join us on a self-drive adventure through the beautiful Basque Country, where the scenic open roads will lead us to incredible cultural experiences. Immerse yourself in the avant-garde charm of Bilbao, explore the captivating coastal beauty of San Sebastian, and indulge in the breathtaking wineries of La Rioja.

## Highlights

- Indulge in the exquisite charm of boutique, **exclusive 4-5-star accommodations** that will elevate your experience and ensure you savour each and every moment to the fullest.
- All the **tours** included **are provided privately**, ensuring you have the undivided attention of a **knowledgeable English-speaking official guide/host**.
- Explore the **Basque Coastline**, including the charming village of Getaria and other coastal gems en route to San Sebastian
- Experience the Basque Country's **pintxos culture**, savouring small, artfully crafted bites in a vibrant and social atmosphere
- Indulge in **La Rioja's** enchanting hills, prestigious wineries, and rich culture. Sip exquisite wines and taste a traditional local lunch!

Embark on a captivating self-drive adventure through the heart of the Basque Country, where each day unfolds like a vibrant canvas of cultural richness and breathtaking landscapes.

Begin your journey in the pulsating city of Bilbao, where the fusion of history and modernity awaits. Wander through the enchanting Old Quarter, savoring the local rhythm, and let the evening guide you on a pintxos tour, where each bite tells a tale of Basque culinary artistry. The next day, dive into Bilbao's cultural tapestry, exploring the iconic Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

As you traverse the Basque Coastline, discover hidden gems like Getaria, where the charm of coastal life unfolds. In San Sebastian, immerse yourself in the city's elegance, indulging in a pintxos lunch that mirrors the vibrant spirit of the region. Venture across the border into the French Basque Country, exploring Biarritz and Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where two cultures seamlessly collide.

En route to La Rioja, absorb the charm of Pamplona, Logroño, and Laguardia before arriving at the architectural masterpiece, Marques de Riscal. Culminate your odyssey with a private winery tour in Rioja, creating memories as rich as the wines that grace this captivating region. Let the open roads and cultural treasures weave a tapestry of inspiration, making this Grand Tour an unforgettable chapter in your travel story.

## INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights in Bilbao at Grand Hotel Domine - 5\*
- 3 nights in San Sebastian at Hotel Maria Cristina- 5\*
- 2 night in La Rioja region at Hotel Marqués de Riscal -5\*
- 1 night in Madrid at Heritage Madrid Hotel - 5 \*
- 6 days Car Rental (from Day 3- Day 8)
- Departure private transfer from Madrid to Madrid Airport
- Private Visit to Old Quarter and Pintxos Tour of Bilbao
- Half-day Tour of Bilbao including the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
- Full-day private excursion of the Basque coastline with a stop en route in Getaria to San Sebastian
- Half-day introductory tour of San Sebastian followed by a pintxos lunch.
- Full-day private excursion to Biarritz and Saint-Jean-de-Luz - Exploring the French Basque Country
- Full-day tour with stops en route in Pamplona, Logroño, and Laguardia on the way to La Rioja.
- Full-day Rioja Winery Tour followed by a traditional lunch in a winery
- Private guided visit to Burgos on the way to Madrid.

## ITINERARY

Day

1

### Bilbao

Make your way to Bilbao and check in at your hotel.

Later, join us on a **Bilbao Private Visit to the Old Quarter and Pintxos Tour!** Explore the charming old town, known as the "Siete Calles," which is filled with historical monuments and beautiful churches, including the Santiago Cathedral and Plaza Nueva, the bustling center of city life. Don't miss the opportunity to indulge in the delicious pintxos, a local specialty found in every bar and tavern. Our knowledgeable local guides will make sure you try some of the most authentic and award-worthy pintxos.

Immerse yourself in the rich history of Bilbao as you stroll along its cobblestone streets, interact with friendly locals, experience the vibrant cultural atmosphere, and discover unique stores. It's an unforgettable experience in one of the most vibrant cities in Northern Spain. We will take you to the heart of **Basque cuisine**, where tradition and innovation merge to create mouthwatering pintxos. Each **pintxo** is a carefully crafted combination of selected ingredients on a slice of bread, guaranteeing a memorable culinary experience.

Our expert local guides, who are passionate food enthusiasts just like all Basque people, will accompany you on this journey of taste sensations. They will ensure that all the pintxos and drinks served during the tour perfectly match your personal preferences.

Overnight stay in Bilbao at **Grand hotel Domine** or similar.





Day **2**

## Bilbao

After breakfast, discover the wonders of Bilbao on this incredible half day private guided tour.

Get ready to be amazed by the modern urban layout and the iconic **Guggenheim Museum**, a true masterpiece brought to life by the brilliant architect Frank O. Gehry. Since its grand opening in 1997, this remarkable museum has become a symbol of Bilbao's urban revival, showcasing incredible works by renowned artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Jeff Koons, and Yves Klein.

Overnight stay in Bilbao at **Grand hotel Domine** or similar.

Breakfast



Day **3**

## Bilbao   Getaria   San Sebastian

After picking up your rental car, embark on a scenic drive to **Getaria**, nestled in the Txacoli wine region.

Getaria, in particular, boasts a rich history predating the production of Txacoli wine. It is the birthplace of Juan Sebastian Elcano, a lesser-known figure but a remarkable explorer who, in the early 16th century, achieved the unprecedented feat of circumnavigating the globe. Furthermore, Getaria earned recognition as one of the recommended destinations in the New York Times' list of 46 places to visit in 2013. This accolade was partially due to its association with another illustrious local resident, the renowned fashion icon *Cristobal Balenciaga*. Fashion enthusiasts can delve into his legacy by exploring the museum dedicated to his groundbreaking work.

However, the true highlight of a visit to Getaria lies in savouring the **exquisite cuisine offered by the local restaurants**. Indulge in delectable grilled fish, sourced fresh from the harbor's fleet of fishing boats (lunch is not included).

Along the scenic coastal route towards San Sebastian, you will also have the chance to stop and appreciate other picturesque spots.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

Breakfast



Day 4

## San Sebastian

Embark on a **half-day private guided tour of San Sebastián**, a city intimately linked to its breathtaking landscape, where the sea, mountains, and a glorious bay tell the tale of Donostia. Led by a local expert, delve into the city's rich history, discover the creative minds that shaped it, explore the Old Town's historical sites, stroll along the iconic Playa de la Concha, and marvel at Eduardo Chillida's awe-inspiring "Comb of the Wind" sculptures.

The astounding city of San Sebastián offers a splendid combination of breathtaking landscapes, rich historical heritage, ground-breaking architectural wonders (such as the Kursaal Congress and Auditorium Center designed by the esteemed recipient of the Pritzker Prize, Rafael Moneo), an unparalleled gastronomic experience that tantalizes the senses.

To all residents of San Sebastian, the term "**pintxos**" evokes visions of delectable delicacies, ranging from simple bites to highly intricate creations of haute cuisine. Such is the passion of San Sebastian's residents for their gastronomy and pintxos that the city organizes an annual competition, wherein bars strive to craft the most delicious and innovative pintxos. Victorious establishments proudly display their plaques outside their doors, with some earning widespread acclaim for a particular dish.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

Breakfast, Lunch





Day **5**

## San Sebastian Biarritz & Saint-Jean-de-Luz San Sebastian

After breakfast, your guide and driver will meet you at your hotel in order to explore the remarkable Basque coastline.

**Biarritz**, also referred to as the "king of beaches and the beach of kings," gained popularity as a result of Eugenie de Montijo and Napoleon III making it their preferred vacation spot. The beaches are a remarkable blend of diverse architectural styles, where tranquil families coexist with vibrant surfers.

**Saint-Jean-de-Luz** is deeply rooted in fishing traditions. The town also boasts impressive architectural structures, such as the Maison Louis XIV and the Maison de l'Infante, serving as reminders of the Sun King's time in the town when he married Maria-Theresa, the Spanish Infanta, in 1660. You can stop for lunch (not included) in a delightful farmer's market, brimming with Basque gastronomic delicacies and imbued with a lively atmosphere (takes place every Tuesday and Friday) or in one of the local restaurants.

Additionally, we recommend making a stop in **Hondarribia**. The town's center is anchored by two historically significant neighborhoods: the old town, which features a labyrinth of cobblestone lanes winding past medieval stone palaces and traditional Basque wood-beamed houses, and the fishermen's village known as the Marina. Along San Pedro Kalea, a tree-lined street, elderly men gather on benches next to vibrant pintxo bars, adding to the lively ambiance.

Overnight stay in San Sebastian at **hotel Maria Cristina** or similar.

Breakfast



## Day 6

### San Sebastian Pamplona & Logrono La Rioja

After breakfast, check out of your hotel in San Sebastian and meet your guide.

Today, we will be heading to the charming **La Rioja wine region** and making stops along the way to visit a few notable cities. Your guide will provide suggestions, and you can decide which cities you would prefer to visit.

Here are some suggested cities:

- **Pamplona**

Situated on the fertile plain of the river Arga, Pamplona is a city steeped in history and enduring traditions. Its historic quarter retains a significant collection of monumental buildings, showcasing its churches and medieval walls. Pamplona harmoniously blends tradition with modernity. Originally founded by the Roman general Pompey in 75 BC, the city gained prominence in the 10th century under the kingdom of Pamplona. During the reign of Sancho III el Mayor in the 11th century, the current route of the Way of Saint James was established, greatly influencing the city's appearance and historical development.

- **Logroño**

Rich in history and traditions preserved since the Middle Ages, Logroño is a significant town along the Pilgrim's Route to Santiago de Compostela. This route's popularity contributed to the town's importance, leaving behind an intriguing monumental legacy tied closely to the passing of pilgrims. Logroño's history is intertwined with the Pilgrim's Route to Santiago de Compostela, to the extent that the city only gained significance starting from the 11th century when the route's popularity surged. The historic center features notable cultural sites, such as the Cathedral of Santa María la Redonda (15th-18th centuries), with its baroque towers overlooking the Market square. The current cathedral was built on the site of an old circular Romanesque church. Remarkable sculptures by Gregorio Fernández and a representation of the way of the cross by Renaissance maestro Michelangelo adorn the cathedral.

- **Laguardia**

In the medieval town of Laguardia, surrounded by ancient heritage, charming cobblestone streets, and a captivating history, we will spend the day exploring and getting lost in its enchanting corners.

You will then reach Hotel Marques de Riscal for your 2 nights in the La Rioja wine region.

Overnight stay at **Hotel Marqués de Riscal** or similar

Breakfast



## Day 7

### La Rioja

Experience a **meticulously tailored wine tour**, intricately designed according to your preferences and desires. This tour can be personalized to incorporate a diverse array of remarkable individuals, who uphold the rich traditions and unparalleled excellence of La Rioja. We take immense pride in offering the utmost quality and diversity that Rioja has to offer, cherishing both its illustrious past and its current vibrant tapestry of wineries, both renowned and hidden gems.

Indulge in a comprehensive **full-day Rioja Winery Tour**. You will have exclusive access to esteemed wine makers, presenting an unprecedented opportunity to delve into their craft.

As part of this enchanting experience, **a traditional lunch is included**. You have the choice of savouring your meal at an authentic local restaurant or enjoying a private lunch within one of the small wineries, depending on availability (*We kindly request that you inform us of your preferences in advance to ensure a truly tailored experience*).

This all-inclusive tour encompasses a private guide at your disposal, facilitating an immersive and personalized journey. It also features winery visits, tastings, and the captivating lunch experience.

Overnight stay at **Hotel Marqués de Riscal** or similar

Breakfast, Lunch





Day **8**

## La Rioja   Burgos   Madrid

After having breakfast, drive to Burgos, a city in Castilla-Leon that holds significance as a part of the Pilgrim's Road to Santiago de Compostela.

It continues to showcase significant remnants of its medieval grandeur. As the former capital of the unified kingdom of Castilla-Leon for a duration of five centuries, this city takes pride in its exceptional example of Spanish Gothic architecture: the cathedral of Burgos, which has been recognized as a World Heritage site. Additionally, apart from exploring the historical district, you can enjoy a fascinating stroll along the banks of the Duero and Arlanza rivers.

Continue on to Madrid for your last night of this incredible adventure. Drop of your car rental.

Overnight stay in Madrid at **Heritage Madrid Hotel** or similar.

Breakfast



Day **9**

## Madrid   Madrid Airport



After breakfasts, take your departure transfer to Madrid Airport.

Breakfast

## ACCOMMODATION

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### Gran Hotel Domine

#### Bilbao

The Gran Hotel Domine is located in the city's most desired location, directly opposite Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

With 145 air-conditioned and soundproof, some with views of the Guggenheim, guests can enjoy a relaxing stay in the heart of Bilbao. Rooms feature en-suite bathrooms with bathtubs, bathrobe and slippers, free WiFi, USB connection and a 40" flat-screen TV with international satellite channels and HDMI.

Breakfast is served on the roof terrace with spectacular views over the museum and the River Nervion. Guests can also sample different dining options at Le Café restaurant or at Sixty-One Lobby Bar. The Hotel Domine has also a Wellness Centre with fitness area, sauna and Turkish bath.



### Hotel Maria Cristina

#### San Sebastian

Since it opened in 1912 Hotel Maria Cristina a Luxury Collection Hotel has been intimately linked to the history and cultural life of San Sebastian. In the late 19th century the seaside town on the southern point of the Bay of Biscay became a favourite destination for royalty and aristocrats who came to enjoy the sunshine and newly recognized therapeutic properties of sea bathing.

San Sebastian had passed from being a sleepy fishing village into a thriving cosmopolitan town requiring luxurious, modern facilities to meet the demands of its discerning guests. The majestic design of the hotel by architect Charles Mewes, the man responsible for the Ritz in Madrid and Paris, combined with the property's enviable river setting and sea views, resulted in it immediately becoming the favored accommodation for international high society.



## Hotel Marqués de Riscal, a Luxury Collection Hotel

### Rioja

This stunning 21st-century chateau was designed by internationally renowned architect Frank Gehry and is a true masterpiece. Located in The City of Wine this 5-star hotel is truly an adventure of a lifetime. Prepare to savour a one-of-a-kind experience of all the senses at Hotel Marques de Riscal.

Enjoy local cuisine and fine wines at 1860 Tradicion or Marques de Riscal Restaurant, both overseen by Michelin-starred Chef Francis Paniego, or soak up the benefits of the grape at the Vinothérapie SPA Caudalie Marqués de Riscal. Welcome to the only hotel created by Frank Gehry where each of the unique 61 guestrooms and suites promises to enchant with exceptional designer touches and enviable views of the countryside, medieval town of Elciego or the striking architecture.



## Heritage Hotel Madrid

### Madrid

The Heritage Hotel Madrid is an oasis in the heart of Madrid where you can live unique experiences surrounded by details of classic elegance,



19th century furniture and the exclusive service of the staff.

In the most exclusive area of Madrid, in the Barrio de Salamanca, next to the most select boutiques of the Golden Mile. Discover an authentic luxury hotel, the Rooms and Suites, Terrace Bar, the spectacular Lobby and the Restaurant.

The Haroma restaurant is overseen by two Michelin-starred executive chef Mario Sandoval, whose philosophy emphasises the importance of using fresh, local ingredients



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE  
Spanish

LOCAL CURRENCY  
Euro

- Please note that this product is not part of our Flexible booking policy as the supplier terms and conditions apply. Our Team will advise you of the exact booking conditions at the time of the booking.
- All services are subject to availability and prices may fluctuate between the time your proposal is prepared and when the trip is confirmed. When a final itinerary is set, we will provide you with the final price for the trip. We recommend you book on the early side to secure the best guides and hotel rooms, and to avoid disappointment.
- All **private tours** and experiences **can be adjusted based on the requirements and preferences of our clients**. Half-day tours range from 3 to 4 hours; full-day tours are approximately 8 hours in length.
- All transfers are with English-speaking professional drivers. The vehicles vary between a Mercedes E class or Mercedes Minivan, depending on the type of service and number of passengers.