

Maribel's Guide to Hondarríbia ©



This fishing village in Gipuzkoa is widely considered one of the most picturesque coastal villages in all of Spain with its charming and colorful La Marina quarter, the much photographed fishermen's homes of Calle San Pedro with their green, blue and red shutters and geranium bedecked balconies. The historic walled medieval quarter overlooks the city and is filled with palaces and the Castle/Parador Carlos V. The

wide beach winds along the river to the coast. It makes an excellent and inexpensive small town base where you can spend several days exploring the Pays Basque, the lush valleys of Navarra and inland Gipuzkoa. Whether you decide to stay in grand style at the Castle Parador or opt for something simple, but comfortable, in one of the 6 agrotourist homes, you'll be rewarded with lovely views, fantastic food, a lively fishing quarter for tapas in the evening, nice shopping and a friendly populace. You can buy food and wine for a picnic at **Solbes**, the gourmet food purveyor across from the TI, or at **Altzaga** (great breads) on Calle San Pedro in La Marina. Have an inexpensive breakfast (yummy "tostadas" and "ladrillos") at **Cafeteria Kai-Alde**, on the main drag near the port.



Agroturismos

Great for budgeters or those who want to "sleep cheap and eat well"

I highly recommend the friendly and warm **Iketxe**, a house that the owner built entirely from scratch. It has only 5 rooms, but they're spacious, filled with handmade country furniture, pleasantly decorated with kiln rugs on polished wood floors, private baths, with hair dryers. Room 3 downstairs has its own large private terrace, while room 1 has an enclosed sitting area. The outgoing Patxi speaks no English but his wife, Fátima, does speak some English and is fluent in French. They have two small boys and two cute dogs, which stay outside. Tel: 943 644 391, or email: iketxe5@terra.es

If the Iketxe is full consider the immaculate **Maidanea**, Tel: 943 640 855, or the 17th century **Artoz Enea**, Tel: 943 642 319. Ask for the largest and nicest room, No. 4, with a balcony. All of the homes are located in the close-in countryside, only 2 minutes from the center of Hondarríbia as the crow flies, but 7 minutes down very narrow, country roads that you'll share with farm tractors and people out for a walk. Best to ask the owners either to send you a very detailed little map, or have them meet you at the Hondarríbia airport to guide you to the properties. Do not attempt to find them at

night. You may be able to pick up directions to all the agrotourist homes and a guide at the Hondarribia Tourist Office. See pictures of all 3 at www.nekatur.net. All of the homes are featured in Alistair Sawday's "Special Places to Stay/Spain" guide.

The **Txenduneabe Azpi** is a new agrotourist home that opened in the summer of 2003. It has only 2 bedrooms that share a bath. Perfect for a party of four.

In the Old Quarter



The castle/fortress **Parador de Carlos V** dates from the 10th century; 8 ft. thick walls. Ferdinand and Isabella and their son Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor once resided here. One of the most atmospheric castle Paradors in the system, filled with antiques, suits of armor, tapestries. Reserve a room with view of bay below. Room 301 has views of the bay and the Old Quarter and has a sitting room, attic and 2 balconies. 36 rooms. **No restaurant.** www.parador.es

The 15th century archbishop's mansion, the 3-star **El Obispo**, has 17 rooms with décor done by the designers of Artespaña. Rooms have TV, mini-bar and pretty views of the estuary. The best room is No. 202 in yellow with a black wrought-iron headboard and two French carved wooden chairs. Room 204 is also very nice. Cheerful breakfast room and also a 14-person dining room only open in summer. It seems lighter, airier, less dark and gloomy than its neighbor, the Pampinot because it is set on an open square. It's used by Cobblestone Tours for its architectural tour "Barcelona to Bilbao". Owners are friendly, prices moderate, and they respond to emails quickly. Owner: Victor Alza Lekuona. Breakfast is extra. www.hotelobispo.com

Another palatial mansion, the 3-star **Pampinot**, housed Maria Teresa before her wedding to Louis XIV. It has an austere stone façade but the reception is a spacious area with massive stone floor and exposed stonewalls with 2 huge altarpieces. There's also a little bar tucked into what was once the fireplace and a dramatic staircase leads up to the 8 bedrooms, 4 on each level, each decorated differently. But it may be too dark and heavily ornate for your taste. Owner: Olga Alvarez. Breakfast is extra. www.hotelpampinot.com



A sweet little new hotel, very inexpensive, on Hondarribia's prettiest plaza of the Old Quarter, la Plaza de Gipuzkoa, is the **Hotel Palacete**, a renovated mansion, with doubles from 55 (low) to 80 (high season). Breakfast served on terrace for 6 euros. Rooms with satellite TV, Internet access, safes, baths with hair dryer, but no a/c. Book the largest room with wall of windows facing the square.

www.hotelpalacete.net/cast/palacete.html

In modern Hondarribia within walking distance of the village

The 4-star minimalist design, but very attractive, Hotel **Jàizkibel**, offers very comfortable, modern rooms for at moderate price. There is private parking, a restaurant, bar and all the modern conveniences. Opened in '03. www.hoteljaizkibel.com/jaizkibel.htm

Family apartments

The **Hotel Jauregui**, a member of the Husa chain, down in the port, on Calle Zuloaga, has apartments on the top floor of the hotel that can be rented by the day or week. www.hoteljauregui.com Nothing fancy but good for families on a budget.

Dining

Hermanidad de Pescadores, on the main street directly across from the wharf, “La Lonja”, is a rustic, bustling, convivial place for impeccable seafood. You’ll dine at communal wooden tables, but you’ll need to reserve ahead of time, particularly on weekends when the French arrive in droves via the ferry from Hendaye. Try the “merluza en salsa verde” (hake in green sauce), the house specialty. Don’t opt for the menu del día. You’ll find it inexpensive, fun and informal.

For fine dining, a **Michelin star** treat, choose the family run **Alameda**, across from the road leading up to the Old Quarter and the Parador. Considered by gastronomic critics as one of the finest spots in all the Basque Country. The owner / chef, Gorka Txapartegui, is one of the country’s rising stars. Closed Sunday nights and Mondays plus the first weeks of January and October.

For a more formal and traditional haute cuisine meal in an elegant setting try **Ramón Roteta**. The restaurant is housed in a pretty villa with a lovely terrace for alfresco dining and can be found on the main road leading into town. Tables boast beautiful china and crystal. The food is refined, and the chef creates fine desserts, particularly homemade ice creams. Closed Sunday nights and Tuesdays except during the summer. Closed the last 2 weeks in February and all of November.

For something in between, choose restaurante **Sebastián**, on the Calle Mayor in the Old Quarter. It’s on the way to the Parador, on your right past the town hall. This restaurante is in a former tobacco shop and has a cozy downstairs dining room with open beams and a fireplace with walls covered with paintings by local artists. The chef is from Andalucía, not Basque. Closed Sunday nights and Tuesdays, and during November.

Pintxos



There are two great pintxo bars located in the fishing quarter. The first, **Gran Sol** is located along the pedestrian Calle San Pedro, which is one short block behind the main street. The bar, run by two young men, has won numerous gastronomic awards for their creative pintxos. Go early because the pintxos disappear quickly and kitchen closes before 11:00 pm.

The second bar, found on Calle Zuloaga, the main street is **Yola Berri**, a local hangout with long wooden tables and benches, and a bar covered with pintxos from 11:00 am on. It's across the street from the Hotel Jauregui at San Pedro, 22. The hotel has its own fine pintxos bar, the **Enbate**, which is very handy for late night dining, as the kitchen doesn't close until 11:30 pm.

Internet access

The **English Corner** is on Calle Zuloaga, about half way down the main street of the village. Friendly Basque-American owner, Charo Azkue, offers tours of the Bidasoa area, even daylong trips to Bilbao and the Guggenheim. www.hondarribiatours.com

Ferries from the new pier/beach area to the neighboring beaches of Hendaye, across the river, departs every 30 minutes and cost 2,50€/round trip.