

San Sebastián-Donostia

Maribel's Guide to San Sebastián ©



Maribel's Guides for the Sophisticated Traveler TM

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San Sebastián-Donostia

Compact, elegant, sophisticated and stately, San Sebastián, once a simple fishing village, has evolved into a Parisian looking city filled with Belle Époque architecture. Called “La Bella Easo”, the Pearl of the Cantabrian Sea, the beachside city is considered one of Spain’s most beautiful destinations. And like Biarritz, its neighbor just up the coast in the French Basque Country, San Sebastián is a mix of traditional Basque charm, sophistication and savior-vivre, while its cuisine is widely considered to be some of the best in the world thanks in no small measure to the host of great Basque chefs who call San Sebastián home. Made famous during the second half of the 19th-century by the Spanish Royal Family who came here to take the waters, San Sebastián, the capital of Gipuzkoa, soon became the official summer residence of the Spanish Court, a fashionable spa and meeting place for royalty, aristocracy and Spain’s ruling classes. You’ll marvel at the elegance of both the spectacular turn of the century homes overlooking the Bay of Biscay and the beautiful crescent shaped La Concha Beach, which, along with El Sardinero in Santander, is the prettiest stretch of sand in Spain.

With just 186,000 inhabitants, it and its suburbs have been bestowed 16 Michelin stars, more per square meter than any other city in the world. As a New York Times travel article stated, “To visit San Sebastián on Spain’s northern coast is to fall in love. The first sight of

the shimmering scallop-shaped bay, replete with crescents of golden sand and turquoise waves will sweep you off your feet. Pairing this natural beauty with the unrivaled local cuisine may leave your head spinning”!

When To Visit

Spring is generally mild along the north coast from Galicia to the Basque country. July through mid-September are the busiest times, when most Spaniards take their month-long vacations and head to the beaches and mountains. Lodging will be at a premium during this period, so plan on booking well in advance. September is the ideal month for visiting the Basque coast, but early to mid-June is nearly as nice weather-wise, and high season rates normally don't begin until July 1. The water will be warm enough for swimming, although it's a bit too nippy for more timid tastes used to the waters of the Mediterranean or those of Cádiz and Portugal's Algarve region. It does rain quite often, so a great beach day may come along only once every three or four days. When that happens, the beaches will be packed.

Winters can be rainy, but we've experienced some beautiful days around the time of the [Tamborrada](#), San Sebastián's yearly festival in honor of their patron saint. The celebration begins at midnight on January 19, the start of St. Sebastian's day, in the Plaza de la Constitución, and continues non-stop for the next 24 hours as the city's culinary societies parade through the streets of the Old Quarter in full 19th-century military regalia to the a ear-splitting whacking of drums that keeps everyone awake. An event not to be missed!

The 27th International Youth Football Tournament, the [Donosti Cup](#), will be from July 5-11, 2020, and expected to attract 300 teams with more than 50,000 players and their families from around the world, so plan accordingly. The 7th International Football Tournament of Veterans, the “[Donosti Masters Cup 2020](#)”, will be held in early to mid-June.

The [55th Heineken Jazzaldia](#) Jazz Festival will take place next year from July 22-26, while the [67th International Film Festival](#) will be held this year from September 20-28. The festival attracts celebrities and fans from around the world, drawing more than 174,000 spectators to last year's 9-day event.

[The Quincena Musical](#), a month-long classical musical and dance program goes from the first week of August to the first week of September, and the [Regattas](#) of the thirteen-member “trainera” boats are held in La Concha bay the first two Sundays of September.

The [Aste Nagusia Festival](#), or Semana Grande in Spanish and Big Week in English, is a week long celebration which traces its origins to the middle of the 19th-century. What began as a celebration to entertain the bourgeoisie who would spend their summers in San Sebastián, is now one of the city's biggest festivals, which takes place around the 15 August (Assumption Day) each year, immediately followed by [Aste Nagusia](#) in Bilbao.



Exploring Donostia On Your Own From Zurriola Beach to the Comb of the Wind

Take a self-guided walking tour to discover the spirit of this beautiful city on the bay. If you have parked at the Rafael Moneo-designed, giant translucent cubes of the [Kursaal Center](#) on Avenida Zurriola in Gros, then you can begin your walk by crossing the Urumea River to Alameda del Boulevard by way of the Zurriola Bridge, with its six unique Art Deco style lamp posts dating from 1921. On your left facing the Boulevard, after crossing the bridge, is the beautiful [Victoria Eugenia Theatre](#). Built in 1912, it is one of the cities most emblematic buildings in Belle Époque style. Boulevard Alameda marks the dividing line between the old quarter, the Parte Vieja, and newer sections of the city, and in summer the area fills with musicians playing around the gazebo, cyclists and skate boarders, and folks filling the tables at the outdoor cafés or waiting in line for an ice cream cone at [Oiartzun](#).

At the end of the Boulevard is the Alderi-Elder Park, the large public space facing bay and the eastern sweep of the stunning La Concha beach. On your right you'll see the elegant Ayuntamiento, the City Hall, originally built in 1882 as a Casino. The park's popular, early 19th-century (1813) carrousel or Carrousel Palace, will be filled with children day and night.

Keeping to the left, you'll past another classic beauty of Belle Époque San Sebastián, the [Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra](#). Originally opened in 1916 as a small hotel on the beach, it evolved over the years as it was able to grow and has been host to many aristocrats including the Prince of Wales and the Archduchess Elizabeth of Austria, painters and artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Grand Prix drivers for the Circuito Lasarte (1923-1935), actors such as Orson Wells, and during the First World War, arms dealers and spies, including a Dutch seducer going by the name of Mata Hari, or “eye of the day” in Malay, the perfect handle for the infamous double agent.

Continue your stroll with the locals, walking down Paseo de la Concha, a boardwalk edged with an elegant Art Nouveau, white wrought-iron balustrade running the entire length. The boardwalk parallels the magnificent crescent-shaped La Concha Beach, one of Europe's most beautiful and elegant urban beaches, which lies sheltered between Mount **Urgull** and Mount Igueldo. On a sunny day, during low tide, Donostiarras will be down on the beach taking a brisk walk, engaging in one of Europe's finest beach strolls! If you want, and you're dressed for it, you can join them, or continue along the promenade that leads you through a tunnel under the grounds of [Palacio de Miramar](#), finally ending at Ondarreta beach, the city's third, family-friendly beach, which is situated in the aristocratic neighborhood of Antiguo, an area filled with elegant homes, excellent examples of Basque architecture, steps from the beach. Take a few minutes to stroll along Infanta Beatriz Kalea to see some of these architecturally impressive late 19th century villas in the neighborhood.

Walking along Ondarreta Beach past the [Royal Tennis Club](#), whose [Wimbledon Pub](#) is open to the public, you will soon come to Paseo de Eduardo Chillida, at the westernmost tip of La Concha bay. Here, at the end of a large stone esplanade, you'll find three immense iron sculptures by famed Basque artist [Eduardo Chillida](#) (1924-2002) placed in a triangle on the protective boulders. Called “Peine del Viento”, “Comb of the Wind”, they sit where the waters of the Atlantic continually crash against them. Each piece of this collection weighs in at over ten tons.

While returning to Ondarreta Beach, you may want to take a ride on the [Funicular de Igueldo](#) to the summit of Mount Igueldo for the spectacular views of the bay and mountains, especially at sunset. This charming, little red, two carriage wooden funicular railway, with large Coca-Cola signs painted on the cars, is located behind the tennis club and inaugurated in 1912, when the Mont Igueldo Park opened. The cars are pulled up the steep incline by a series of pulleys and motors and runs every 15 minutes between 10:00 am and 9:00 pm. Cost of a round-trip ticket is 3,15€ for adults, 2,35€ for children. The terraces, with their panoramic view of the city, are open daily. Declared a historical landmark in 2014, there is also a small children's amusement park.

On your return from your funicular ride, walk back above the beaches on the promenade and stop to stroll through the grounds of the stately [Miramar Palace](#). Inaugurated in 1893, and constructed in English Cottage-style by British architect Selden Wornum, it was built for the Regent Queen María Cristina at her own expense because she didn't want it to be a burden to the people who gave her such a warm welcome during her summer holidays here. The palace is not open to the public, but the beautifully manicured grounds are free to all to visit. I love to come here on Sunday mornings to sit on a bench, read the paper and soak up the breathtaking views of the perfect, scallop shaped bay-just gorgeous!

A walk around Mont Urgull

For another “walkabout” on a sunny day, start from Alderi-Elder Park in front of city hall, at the northern end of La Concha Beach, and stroll down to the fishermen's pier following the path to where the Aquarium sits at the end of the pier. From the Aquarium, take the Paseo Nuevo, which circles around the base of Mont Urgell, and brings you back to the Old Quarter and the Zurriola Bridge, a very pretty seaside walk.

On this walk you can stop at the Basque Country's Naval Museum, [Untzi Museoa](#), housed in a 18th-century building, a tower house on three floors in the fisherman's quarter, puerto pesquero, at Paseo del Muelle, 24. Here you will learn a bit about Basque maritime heritage and discover the long-standing tradition that Basques have had with the sea. The first floor explains the traditional ship making methods, the second floor shows the evolution of Basque vessels in style and construction and the third floor houses temporary exhibits.

And be sure to pay a visit to the avant-garde [San Sebastián Aquarium](#), considered the best oceanographic museum in Europe. The special Immersion Tour is available on Saturdays for certified divers, 18 years or older. Opens daily year around at 10:00 am. Entrance is 13€ for adults, 9€ for seniors, and 6,50€ for children 4-12. Audio guide is 2€. [Bokado Aquarium](#) [Mikel Santamaría](#), the restaurant occupying the top floor of the Aquarium, offers a 54€ haute cuisine tasting menu, including wine and VAT and sweeping views of both La Concha Bay and the Bay of Biscay. There is also a more informal cafeteria. For those also headed to Biarritz, there is a combo ticket available for this Aquarium and Biarritz's [Musée de la Mer](#).

Monte Urgull

If you have the time one afternoon, be sure to walk to the top of the “mountain”. One path to the summit starts next to the [San Telmo Museum](#), in Plaza Zuloaga, at the end of your walk around Mont Urgull. Another can be found just to the west of the Basílica de Santa María. At the top you'll find a city park, crowned by the semi-ruined 12th-century Castillo de la Mota, a former military fortress, and a huge Franco era sculpture of Christ, the Scared Heart statue, Cristo de la Mota, which overlooks the city. Go for the picture-perfect views. Closed

at night, it is open daily from May 1 to the end of September from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm and until 7:30 pm during the rest of the year.

Returning from Mont Urgell, be sure to sit at one of the outdoor terraces lining the lovely Constitution Square in the heart of the Old Town, the Parte Vieja, where in the old days, the 1860s, bullfights took place. This is the heart of the pintxos bar area, where locals come each evening starting around 8:00 to do their traditional pintxos crawl from bar to bar.

A view of the city from the bay

To see the city and its magnificent bay from a different perspective, one can take a 30-minute catamaran ride. The [Ciudad San Sebastián](#) (City of San Sebastián) catamaran departs hourly between noon and 7:00 pm from the fishermen's port. Tickets are 12€ for adults, 6€ for children (3-10). Closed during the winter months.

Or take a short boat ride out to the island of Santa Clara for a new perspective on the city's shoreline. [Motoras de la Isla](#) offers this service, and they have a ticket office in the fishermen's quarter on the pier at the beginning of Paseo de Mollaberria. The island boat ride costs 4€, with departures every 30 minutes during the summer starting at 10:00 am, depending on the weather. Or take their 30-minute trip around the bay for 6,50€ between noon and 7:30 pm. Children under 4 ride free. Available from June 1 to September 30.

San Sebastián's churches

Include a visit to San Sebastián's two main churches, standing at opposite ends of the city facing one another. The oldest is the 18th century [Basílica de Santa María del Coro](#) in the Old Quarter, whose gorgeous Churrigueresque-style façade has been recently restored. Built in flamboyant Baroque style, beginning in 1743 atop of an older Romanesque church, it has three naves and Gothic ribbed vaults, and houses the image of the city's patron saint, Nuestra Señora del Coro.

At the other end of town, you'll find the [Catedral del Buen Pastor](#), the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, built in 1887 in neo-Gothic style intended to mimic the great medieval churches of Germany and France, the largest religious building in the city. On its main facade you'll see the "Cross of Peace", a work by the famed Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida. And from its main façade you can see the Basilica of Santa Maria del Coro. While in the Old Quarter, you can also visit the [Iglesia de San Vicente](#), Calle 31 de agosto. This 15th century church is thought to be the oldest monument in San Sebastian.



Guided City Tours

Tourist Office of San Sebastián

San Sebastian offers a number of city tours through the Tourist Office. The [Tourist Train](#), the “Txu-Txu”, leaves from Paseo de Salamanca beginning at 11:00 am for a 40-minute tour of the old town; Boulevard, City Hall and the La Concha promenade, Ondarreta Beach, Miramar Palace, Buen Pastor Cathedral and Teatro Victoria Eugenia Theater. Tickets are available at the Tourist Office and cost 5€ for adults, 3€ for children (5-12).

The city operated [Hop-On Hop-Off bus](#) runs daily, starting at 11:00 am, 10:30 am during August. You can join the tour from 15 different departure points around the city (see map) for a 1-hour tour. Tickets are 12€ for adults, 6€ for children (5-12).

The 2-1/2 hour [San Sebastián shore by Electric Bike](#) tour is available daily at 10:30 am and 3:00 pm in English. Cost is 43€, including electric bike rental and tax. Tickets are available at the main Tourist Information office, Boulevard, 8, and online. Starting place is Calle Reyes Católicos, 14. The 3-hour [Essential San Sebastián by Electric Bike](#) tour is available daily year around at 10:00 am and 3:00 pm in English (upon request). Cost is 45€, including electric bike rental and tax. Tickets are available at the main Tourist Information office, Boulevard, 8, and online. Starting place is the Plaza Sarriegi, 9. Child seats available.

They also offer a [Pintxos Tour of the Old Town](#) available twice a day for 65€, and a [Pintxos Tour in Gros](#), Tuesday-Sunday, at 12:30 and 6:30 pm for 73€/person.

Private City Tours

There are now a number companies offering private walking and pintxos tours. Most are newcomers to the area and some are new businesses that have started as a result of the growing popularity of San Sebastián-Donostia. Here are our recommendations, starting with the cities original, and still the best.

Tenedor Tours

A more exclusive private pintxos walking tour can be arranged with the leading American food expert in the Basque Country, Gabriella Ranelli, or with her husband, retired professional jai alai player (pelota), Aitor Aguirre. This highly informative, insider's pintxos tour departs from the Tourist Office at Boulevard, 8, at your chosen hours, preferably early enough to avoid the crowds, for lunch or dinner, and usually last around 2-1/2 hours. She's highly personable, a great guide and friend. Private tours include a [Pintxos/Tapas Walkabout](#), [Gourmet Walking Tour](#), and the 3-day [San Sebastián City Break](#). Gabriella also offers gastronomic excursions outside of the city, including the Rioja, Pays Basque and even the Bordeaux wine region and visits to vineyards in Getaria.

Burt Wolf used Gabriella for his PBS special on San Sebastián and the Basque Country in his [Local Flavors #107: San Sebastián, Spain](#), she has escorted travel guru Rick Steves on his city visits, and she made the arrangements for and she and her husband appeared in Anthony Bourdain's [Parts Unknown Destination San Sebastián](#)” program filmed in May 2017 featuring the Basque Country. The Wall Street Journal named Gabriella as one of Europe's top 10 culinary guides.

Other Private City Tour Options

[Discover San Sebastian](#) is a possible option, owned and operated by a native, for a pintxos or a walking tour of the city if Gabriella is busy. [MIMO San Sebastián](#), formally San Sebastián Foods, offers pintxos tours, cooking classes and excursions. [San Sebastian Pintxos Tours](#), founders of the original [todopintxos.com](#) (2005), good for larger groups. [San Sebastián Walking Tours](#), walking and pintxos tours in English by an expat.

Cooking Classes and Schools in Donostia

Basque Pintxos Cooking Classes

Tenedor Tours

Gabriella Ranelli offers one-day, private, “hands on” [pintxos cooking classes](#) on a limited basis. The Classic Cooking Class features pintxos and traditional Basque dishes with a modern touch, then enjoy the fruits of your labor with wine and good conversation.

Basque Cooking Classes

Luis de Irizar

In the Parte Vieja at Mari, 5, but he has a waiting list a mile long. Courses are for both professionals and amateurs, in Spanish, but will conduct courses in English for small groups (8-12) during the summer. He’s featured in the San Sebastian chapter of Anthony Bourdain’s “Kitchen Confidential” book: “A Cook’s Tour”.

El Txoko del Gourmet

Located in the Parte Vieja at C/Aldamar, 4, it offers intensive cooking courses for professionals as well as practical courses for tourists.

Karlos Arguiñano

The famous TV chef offers cooking classes at his [hotel](#) in the nearby coastal village of Zarautz.

Basque Culinary Center

The Culinary Center, the second gastronomic university in Europe, and a pioneering academic institution, opened its classrooms in 2011 and offers university degrees in the culinary arts as well as offering courses for cooking enthusiasts in Spanish, Basque and English under direction of some of the Basque Countries top chefs.



San Sebastián's Beaches

It rains quite a bit along the north coast, which is why it's referred to as "Green Spain". For every four days, perhaps one will be a great beach day. But when the sun does come out everyone heads to the beach (so go early!). The beaches are also extremely popular with walkers that on a sunny summer day everyone who can heads to the beach for a long walk; morning, afternoon or evening.

While the magnificent, and most photographed, crescent shaped La Concha Beach, with its golden sands stretching more than 1-1/2 kms, considered the second best beach in Europe by Travel and Leisure magazine in 2017, attracts the most walkers, Zurriola Beach in the Nuevo Gros quarter to the east, with its generally wilder surf, is a magnet for surfers and Millennials. The smaller Ondarreta Beach, in the Antiguo quarter to the west, where the water is calmer, not as affected by the tides, is the most family-friendly beach, providing a children's playground, above ground swimming pool for children's swimming lessons, *chiringuitos* (beachfront bars and restaurants), stands for ice cream or sandwiches, handicapped access, a free Wi-Fi zone, kayak rentals, tents, a jogging trail, bike trail, ping pong tables and beach volley ball. You can walk between La Concha and Ondarreta at low tide through the *Pico de Loro*, or the parrot's beak, a small passage with stairs over the rock outcropping below the Miramar Palace that disappears at high tide.

The island of Santa Clara has a small beach, referred to as the “4th beach”, measuring only about 30 meters, and while not much in the way of a beach, especially at high tide, it offers a bar with terrace, first aid station and a natural sea water swimming pool. You can reach the beach by canoe or kayak, boat or paddle board, or by swimming to the island.

Note that these are public beaches and, as with most northern Spanish beaches, are rather conservative, not as much topless bathing as you’ll find is in the Mediterranean, but everyone is welcome and the beaches are kept very clean. No dogs. The official beach season opens June 1 and ends September 30.

Surfboards and bicycle rentals

For surfboard rentals, head to [Pukas Surf Eskola](#) (school) at Zurriola Hiribidea, 24, across from Zurriola Beach, or to [Zurriola Surf Eskola](#) at Calle Usandizanga, 14, with a shop on the beach. [Sanse Bikes](#), at Boulevard, 25, rents bikes for exploring the city.

Or, try [dBizi](#), the cities own electric (Booster Bike) bike rental system with 16 locations around the city. Buy a card for 1, 3 or 5 days. Bikes are available from 6:30 am to midnight during July and August, until 11:00 pm the rest of the year.

Thalassotherapy

[La Perla Spa](#)

After a long walk along La Concha Beach, you might enjoy a thalassotherapy-spa experience along with unmatched views of the Concha Bay. The spa, sheltered by the roof of an eclectic building, the Balneario La Perla del Océano, dating from the beginning of 20th century (1912), was designed to cater to European nobility. Inside you will find 4,500 square meters of cutting-edge technology for sports circuits, physical therapy. There is also a fully equipped gym. Open daily from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm, day passes are available from 18€ to 37€.

Or relax in the afternoon on the terrace of their bar-restaurants, La Perla and El Perlón. The terrace is open daily during the spring and summer until 11:00 pm. It makes for a great late night spot for a GinTonic under the stars.



Donostia's Markets

[Mercado de la Brecha \(La Bretxa\)](#)

In the *Parte Vieja*, the Old Quarter, off Calle Aldamar, this market is located underneath a two-story shopping mall where you'll rub elbows with the culinary star chefs of the Basque Country (Martin Berasategui, Andoni Luis Aduriz, Pedro Subijana, and Juan Mari and Elena Arzak) who will be choosing the freshest of fish for their famous Michelin-starred dining emporia that day. This market, along with Bilbao's [Mercado de la Ribera](#), rivals Barcelona's [La Boquería](#) in the amazing variety and quality of food on display. There are also daily outdoors farmers' stands on the street level.

[Mercado de San Martín](#)

Then move on to the corner of San Marcial and Loyola downtown. This market has an exciting look and a great buzz to it and is housed on two floors, with gourmet boutiques plus meats/vegetable/cheese stands on the ground floor and the fishmongers in the lower, basement level, along with a handy Super Amara supermarket with coffee bar and a branch of the Barrentxea pastry shop that opens at 9:00 am. [Carnicería Maribel](#) has been selling the finest Iberian ham, including Joselito Gran Reserva and Joselito 5 Bellotas for 40 years. On Thursdays at 7 pm, the market holds a *Gastropote*, with live music.



Sociedad Gastronómica

In your daily walks in the Old Quarter you will probably pass by a Sociedad Gastronómica, commonly referred to in Basque as a *txoko*, the traditional gastronomic social clubs, strictly reserved for men to cook, (the ladies dine and clean), whose members gather to relax and to prepare amazing meals in kitchens often filled with equipment that equal those found in the finest restaurants. They originated as places where men could gather to drink and play cards, later evolving into associations where members of different brotherhoods; cobblers, fishermen, metalworkers, mechanics and lawyers, would meet and cook for each other. The oldest Sociedad was formed in 1870.

In San Sebastián alone there are more than 200 Sociedades, with over 2,000 in the entire French/Spanish Basque Country. Some clubs have hundreds of members, others only 20 to 30. The clubs are also known for their fine singing, and many a fine choir, *orfeón*, has originated in a gastronomic society. The most famous Sociedad is [Gaztelubide](#), whose headquarters are in the Old Quarter of Donostia-San Sebastián. Most of the famous Basque chefs first honed their skills in these all-male eating clubs. Gastronomic Socialites are normally closed to visitors except by invitation, and on San Sebastián Day, January 20th, during the Tamborrada celebration, lead by the Sociedad Gaztelubide.



Performing Arts

The Basque Country, rich in a history of music and the performing arts, offers two excellent venues in San Sebastián-Donostia.

[Teatro Victoria Eugenia](#)

See who's performing at the ornate theatre at Paseo República Argentina, 2, one of the most emblematic Belle Epoque buildings in Donostia. Renovation of the theatre, which first opened in 1912, began in 2001 and was finally completed 6 years later. Visits are free. The theatre is one of the main venues for [Jazzaldia](#), the San Sebastián Jazz Festival, in July. Parking is available nearby.

[Kursaal Convention Center and Auditorium](#)

You can also check out what's doing on, or take a back stage tour, at the Kursaal Center, a controversial design by Navarran architect and Pritzker Prize winner, Rafael Moneo, where opera and ballet are often held. The "cubes of light" is also where the International Jazz Festival is held in late July and the San Sebastián Film Festival in mid to late September. A parking garage is conveniently located under the Kursaal Center.

My Shopping Guide

Shoes made in Spain

- [Jaime Mascaró](#), Calle Garibay, corner of Boulevard
- [Salvador Bachiller](#), corner of Calle San Martín and Calle Urbieta

Basque fashion designers

- [Loreak MENDIAN](#), Calle Hernani, 27
- [Minimil](#), Calle Garbai, 3

Basque Jewelry

- [Casa Munoa](#), Calle Aldamar, 28

Traditional Basque handicrafts

- [Alboka Artesanía](#), Plaza de la Constitución 8

Basque chocolates

- [Chocolates Mendaro](#), Calle Etxaide, 6, corner of San Marcial

Pastries

- [Casa Otaegui](#), Calle San Martín, 31 and Calle Narrika, 15
- [Barrenetxe](#), Plaza Gipuzkoa 9

Gourmet products (anchovies, ham, cheese, oils, wine)

- [Goñi Ardoteka](#), Calle Aldamar, 3
- [Solbes](#), Calle Aldamar, 4, Calle Bermingham, 25 (Gros) and Av. de Zarautz, 2 (Antiguo)
- [Aitor Lasa](#), Calle Aldamar, 12
- [Xibarita Gandarias](#), Calle 31 agosto, 29
- [Elkano 1-Gaztagune](#), Calle Elkano, 1
- [Zaporejale](#), Calle San Jerónimo, 21
- [Vinos Martínez](#), Calle Narrika, 29

Ice cream

- [Heladería Arnaldo](#), Calle Garibai, 2
- [Heladería Oiartzun](#), Calle Igentea, 2



Doing The “Txikiteo” or “Poteo”

A gourmet pintxos crawl

If you prefer a “pintxos crawl” rather than sit-down lunch or dinner, visit a few of the best of the city’s “miniature haute cuisine temples”, where the pintxos served are an art form, a true gastronomic experience. The term *pintxo* refers to a more elaborate tapa created with Basque ingredients, a mouthful or two of foodstuffs originally spread out on a stick, and comes from the verb, *pinchar*, to skewer or puncture. Some were originally called *banderillas*, which are the ribbon draped darts used by the *banderilleros* in the bullfight. Nowadays, pintxos can be small knife and fork creations as well.

At each stop you choose, order a pintxo, preferably one made to order in the kitchen, a *pintxo al momento* or *pintxo caliente*, and a *zurito*, a short draft beer, a *crianza*, a red wine, usually from the Rioja Alavesa, or a *txakolí*, the slightly effervescent, tart, young Basque white wine, which in the more traditional bars, is served in a small, wide-rimmed glass rather than a goblet. For decades txakolí was considered a local, unsophisticated wine but has now become internationally known. In the Gipuzkoa province it’s produced in the towns of Aia, Zarautz and Getaria.

It's more fun to do a pintxos crawl with a group of friends, Basque style, as the local *txikiteros* always go out with their *cuadrilla*. The *txikiteo* is meant to be a social affair. But if not with your *cuadrilla*, just forge right ahead anyway, survey the bars and choose the ones that appeal to your style, then squeeze your way up to the crowded bar. Observe the locals and their well-honed art of ordering, then order without hesitation. This traditional style of the *txikiteo* is, however, slowly disappearing with the increasing number of foreign tourists.

There are now two types of bars from which to choose from, the traditional "old school" pintxos bar, where the cold pintxos are presented lined up in a row, "groaning board" style at the bar, along with a chalkboard menu for hot pintxos made up fresh in the kitchen, and the more creative bars, which now have a much smaller selection of cold pintxos displayed at the bar (or none at all) and a larger, and much more impressive collection written on a chalkboard behind the bar, meaning that their most creative and original dishes are made to order in the kitchen. Three fine examples: La Cuchara de San Telmo, Borda Berri and Casa Urola.

An example of such traditional "old school" pintxos bars would include [Baztán](#) on Calle Puerto, with plenty of table seating for the increasing demand for "pintxos tours" - not too authentic, what some would consider a "pintxos mill". In a few of these traditional bars, the custom still remains of asking the waiter for a plate and choosing the pintxos yourself, usually skewered with a cocktail stick to fasten the bite to the bread, placing them on your plate, with all cold items priced the same. The waiter then charges you according to the number of toothpicks remaining on your plate. You should avoid this custom and those bars that automatically hand you a plate, as during an authentic pintxos crawl, locals order only one or two pintxos per bar, then move on to the next bar. An example of some of these newer style bars include [La Cuchara de San Telmo](#) and [Borda Berri](#), with all of their creations being made to order in an incredibly tiny kitchen.

To get an "early start", and beat some of the crowds, begin your lunch crawl around 12:30, but some kitchens won't be open until noon. In the evening, just before 8:00 should work, with some bars now opening at 7:00 pm and some no longer closing between the lunch and dinner hour. The *txikiteo* is most successfully done Tuesday-Saturday, as some bars are closed Sunday, and many more are closed on Monday. If you are a beginner, you will want to head to the city's picturesque Old Quarter, *La Parte Vieja* (or just *Lo Viejo*). While less than a square mile in size, it offers an almost endless supply of pintxos bars for every budget and appetite. The newly formed *Instituto del Pintxo*, created by the city government to guard over the integrity and quality of the city's many bars, awarded its *Barandilla de Oro* top prize to the following bars: Antonio, Bergara, Borda Berri, Ganbara, Urola and Zazpi. La Cuchara del San Telmo recently won the Premios Talent Gastro for best pintxos bar.



Our Favorite Stops In The Parte Vieja

Restaurante Ganbara*

You should make this classic bar, the “queen of La Parte Vieja”, at San Jerónimo Kalea, 21, across from the Basílica de Santa María, the first stop in your pintxos crawl through the Old Quarter before making your way to more avant-garde spots like Cuchara de San Telmo, Borda Berri and A Fuego Negro. Recommended in the [Academia Vasca de Gastronomía](#) and a favorite of many Michelin starred chefs, specialties here include the *tartaleta de txangurro*, spider crab, *chistorra*, a spicy Basque sausage in puff pastry, or their magnificent assortment of wild mushrooms, *setas*. Other stellar pintxos: their *gamba y espárrago rebozados*, shrimp and white asparagus in tempura batter served with homemade mayo and their *solomillo*, a beef tenderloin with green peppers. Their recipe for garlic shrimp with *chiles de árbol* has been featured in Bon Appetit. Closed Sunday afternoon and all day Monday. The owners of Ganbara have recently taken over Bar Tamboril (below).

Tel: (+34) 943 422 575

Moving onto Calle 31 de Agosto...

A Fuego Negro*

Eat, Drink, Listen, Watch, Learn

This contemporary space at 31 de Agosto, 31, is considered one of the most avant-garde of all the designer pintxos spots in the city. Done in red and black, it's as cutting edge as *La Ceba*, down the street, is old-fashioned. The chalkboard menu is written mostly in Basque, so you'll need a sense of humor to decipher it. It's all quite amusing. Some pintxos are served in paper cups and others in shot glasses, *txupitos*. An example: the *Tigretón*, consisting of warm tomatoes, béchamel, mussels and baby vegetables, meant to be eaten with a spoon. Some pintxos are sweet; it's one of the few bars offering dessert pintxos, including their chocolate zombie. It offers a quite impressive, varied selection of wines by the glass from a multitude of appellations. One can feast on pintxos sitting down, as it has a small dining area with nine tables and offers a tasting menu for 35€, and a super degustation menu for 50€, excluding wine. Its tasting menus is served in the dining space only. The bar was featured in an LA Times travel article on dining in the Basque Country; "*If Arzak is elegance, A Fuego Negro is funk*", and recommended in the [Repsol Guide](#) for 2019. Kitchen is open for lunch from 1:30 pm to 3:30 and in the evening from 8:30 to 10:30 pm. Closed on Monday and two weeks in February.

Tel: (+34) 650 135 373

Gandarias

At 31 de Agosto, 23, Gandarias displays both a groaning board of cold pintxos, all equally priced at 2,50€, and a chalkboard menu of hot pintxos, prepared *al momento*. We recommend their risotto of mushrooms, *pintxo de solomillo*, a seared beef sirloin with a green pepper, and their shrimp brochette with pancetta. In addition, it offers a restaurant for feasting on *chuletón*, fish and fine Iberian ham of the Joselito label, and has a gluten free menu and vegetarian options. There is also an excellent selection of wine from which to choose. Open daily from 11:00 am until midnight.

Tel: (+34) 943 426 362

La Cuchara de San Telmo*

At 31 de Agosto, 28 bajos, it's tucked away at the end of a small square, *Plazuela de Don Alvaro del Valle de Lersundi*. Still fantastic, it's constantly evolving and still packing them in. It now offers wine pairings with its pintxos. Still on my top ten list, although its "spin off", [Borda Berri](#) is usually less crowded. Outside, around the corner, the bar offers some table seating for sit-down dining. The kitchen doesn't open for lunch until 12:30. If you can make it here before 1:00 pm you can usually find a nice spot at the bar. It was featured a few

years ago in the NY Times - "[36 Hours in San Sebastián, Spain](#)". Some of Alex Montiel's stand-out creations here include: *foie con jalea de manzana*, pan fried foie with apple jelly, *risotto cremoso de bacalao*, a creamy cod risotto, *canelón cremoso de carnes*, meat-filled cannelloni, *carrillero de ternera guisada en vinto tinto*, a veal cheek braised in red wine and *pulpo salteado con berza*, sautéed octopus with red cabbage. Every dish is magnificent. For dessert try the *terrino de chocolate con naraja confitada* or the cold strawberry cappuccino. Open Wednesday-Sunday noon to 3:30 pm and Tuesday-Sunday evening for your pintxos crawl from 7:30 to 11:00 pm, closed all day Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 435 446

Bar La Ceba

Opened in 1948, the most typical, most Basque of all, is found at Calle 31 de Agosto, 7-9. Besides the selection of pintxos at the bar, they offer a daily lunch menu for 18€ and a weekend lunch menu for 30€. Open Wednesday-Monday from 11:00 am to midnight. Closed Tuesday.

Tel: (+34) 943 426 394

La Viña

At Calle 31 de Agosto, 3, La Viña can serve as your pintxos repast's final course, your dessert stop on this fine bar-laden street, as chef Santiago Rivera's original burnt cheese cake, *tarta de queso*, brings in the crowds. If you love it, learn how to make it [here](#). Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:30 am to 5:00 pm and in the evening from 6:30 to midnight. Winner of 2017's "Más gastronomía" award. Closed on Mondays and all of November.

Tel: (+34) 943 4427 495

Now, moving beyond Calle 31 de agosto...

Bar Tamboril

Calle Arrandegi, 2, at the corner of Plaza de la Constitución, this local favorite, "Tambo", is a small classic with friendly service and a bar heaped with beautifully presented pintxos and lower prices. Specialties: breaded red pepper stuffed with cod, their canapé of grilled mushrooms (champis) and their breaded shrimp, *gambas a la gabardina*. There is an English menu at the bar. It is now in the skilled hands of the owners of Ganbara (above).

Tel: (+34) 943 423 507

Bar Txepetxa

Across the street, at Pescadería, 5, is where anchovy lovers will want to make a beeline. This is the city's Anchovy Cathedral, as this lively bar serves the best *anchoas* in the Cantabrian

Sea and prepares them on *tostas* or canapés in about fifteen different guises. The recipes are a well guarded secret. This bar is over 110 years old and now run by the third generation. Specialties: Anchovies topped with a spider crab cream sauce and anchovies with trout roe. A local favorite: the “Jardinera”, a canapé that consists of a mixture of red and green pepper and onion topped with 2 anchovies doused with vinegar. Glenn Close was a fan. Open Wednesday to Sunday from noon to 3:00 pm, and Wednesday to Sunday evenings from 7:00 to 11:00 pm. Closed all day Monday and Tuesday afternoons.

Tel: (+34) 943 422 227

Bar Zeruko

At Pescadería 10, Josean Calvo, the owner of this contemporary, avant-guard pintxos bar has now changed his concept to become more of a pintxos restaurant, so that his clients can dine seated at 60 spaces, enjoy a series of pintxos and share a bottle of wine. He has maintained his most iconic dish here, the *Hoguera*, a serving of cod that the client smokes to his pleasure on a grill then places on a piece of toast with cream and herbs. Prices have now increased. Closed Sunday night and Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 423 451

Bar Néstor*

This popular spot is found at Pescadería, 11, directly across from Zeruko. The owners, Néstor Morais and Pilar Senra Lizarazu, like to keep it simple and have been doing so since 1980, using prime quality ingredients to create three special masterpieces: a fabulous *chuletón*, or rib steak of Galician aged beef, a delicious garden fresh tomato salad, and the mouth-watering, highly coveted *tortilla de patatas*, their famous potato omelet. The omelet comes out twice a day; once for lunch at 1:00 and then later in the evening at 8:00. It's cut into 16 or so equal portions, and you should plan on arriving at least 15-20 minutes ahead to put in your order, and you may be one of the lucky few to taste the city's best Spanish omelet. The secret ingredient, says my spy, is the caramelized onion. Or reserve ahead and come here to sit at the pre-reserved mythic “*mesa 19*”, Néstor's one and only table, to feast on a meal of tomatoes and their fabled *chuletón*. Open Tuesday-Saturday from 1:00-3:30 and again from 8:00-11:00 and on Sunday from 1:00-3:30 only. Closed Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 424 873

Borda Berri*

At Fermín Calbetón, 12, this creative spot gets my gold star for its better prices, delicious, creative treats made to order in the kitchen and friendly service. Other than the tortillas they have displayed on the counter, every dish is made up fresh in the kitchen. This bar was opened by Iñaki Gulin, one of the creators of [La Cuchara de San Telmo](#), and displays the

same kind of originality and creativity in the kitchen, innovative Basque fare not to be missed. Recommended in the [Repsol Guide](#).

Try their grilled two scallops pintxos: the *viera asada con puré de coliflor* and the *viera a la plancha con mermelada de melocotón*, or the goat cheese toasted with plums, *keso de kabra, tostado con ciruela*, the cheese risotto, *risotto cremoso de Idiazábal*, the veal cheeks braised in red wine, *carrillera de ternera al vino tinto*, the duck confit with dried plums, *pato confitado con puré de ciruelas pasas*, and the tomato filled with albacore, *tomate relleno de bonito*. For dessert sample their chocolate ganache with Cointreau. Open Wednesday-Sunday from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm and Tuesday-Sunday from 7:30 pm to 11:30 pm. Closed Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 430 342

[Casa Urola*](#)

Chef Pablo Loureiro's landmark restaurant, founded in 1956, at Fermín Calbetón, 20, one of our tops in Donosti, offers stylish dining in the upstairs dining room, along with very high quality *pintxos* in its renovated downstairs bar. Although not inexpensive, Pablo's creations, including his *txapelas de hongo a la parilla con yema de huevo, salsa de pato y piñones* (grilled wild mushrooms with egg yolk, duck sauce and pine nuts), his artichokes with an almond praline and ham sauce and his foie with white beans, are quite memorable and worth the moderate splurge. And don't leave the city without sampling his *torrija*, a type of pain perdu. Chef Pablo is a member of the *Sukatalde* group of rising stars chefs from Gipuzkoa, and his restaurant has earned two Repsol suns. Urola recently received a prestigious "best service" award from the Instituto del Pintxo. The bar opens from 12:00 to 4:00 pm and again from 7:00-11:30. The restaurant serves lunch from 1:15-4:00 and dinner from 8:15-11:00 pm. Closed Tuesday.

Tel: (+34) 943 441 371

[La Jarana Taberna](#)

Housed in a lovely 19th century building, now the stylish Lasala Plaza Hotel at Mari Kalea 3 facing the port, this new bar-restaurant is supervised by noted chef Ander González of Astelena 1997 and EITB's "A Bocados" cooking program. The inviting, contemporary space is divided into two zones: one for an informal *picoteo* and the other for sit-down dining. Our favorite pintxos: *pastel de merluza* and *ropa vieja*. For dessert try the chef's delicious berry- topped cheesecake. This space, La Jarana, takes its name from the original name of the fishermen's quarter. Open daily.

Tel: (+34) 943 547 001



Our Favorites Stops In Gros

Once you've experienced the traditional *txikiteo*, the “pintxos pilgrimage” from bar to bar in the Old Quarter, you might want to try some of the less touristed bars in the neighborhood of Gros, a pleasant walk east from the Kursaal Center off Zurriola Beach. On Thursdays the following bars in Gros participate in the initiative known as the pintxo-pote, offering a wine or beer along with a pintxo of the day for only 2,50-3€: **Elosta**, Paseo Colón, 42, **Ipotx**, San Francisco, 42, **Ezkurra**, Miracruz, 17, **Txoko de Ramiro**, Txofre 6, **Zabaleta**, Zabaleta 51 and **Mil Catas**, Zabaleta 55.

Starting at the Kursaal Center

Ni Neu*

Located at the western end of the Rafael Moneo-designed Kursaal Performing Arts Center, at Avenida Zurriola, 1, Ni Neu (meaning “I Myself” in Basque) is now in the hands of two-Michelin starred chef Andoni Luis Aduriz of Mugaritz, Restaurant Magazine’s number 7 best chef in the world, and his Grupo IXO, and has been awarded one Repsol sun. It’s designed for versatility, to provide something for all types of diners-with a downstairs bar open for breakfast, sandwiches, pintxos, large plates and mini plates, and a terrace for cocktails, along with a dining space with picture windows facing the river and sea. What we enjoy is stopping

here for pre-lunch pintxos around noon. There is a degustation menu for 38€ with optional wine pairing for 12€. If it's a sunny day, we take our treats out to the terrace, as there is no table service there. just grab a tray and sit at an open table and soak up the sea views. The service at the bar is first rate, and if one orders a drink, the homemade potato chips come on the house. The bar opens from noon until 11:00 pm. The restaurant serves lunch from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm and dinner from 8:00 to 11:30 pm. From June 21 to October 13 the restaurant opens everyday for lunch and dinner.

Tel: (+34) 943 003 162

Gatxupa

This new Basque-Mexican hybrid spot at Usandizaga, 17, is the creation of Basque-born, renowned chef, Bruno Oteiza, who earned his fame at Mexico City's Biko. It's housed in a post-industrial looking space, with both a pintxos area with U-shaped bar and table seating upstairs and restaurant in the basement. Here we enjoyed his camembert and anchovy pintxo, the pork belly and lemon papada and a ceviche acapulqueño. His unusual, spicy ensaladilla rusa features habanero chiles. Open daily and continuously from 11:00 am to 1:30 am, except for Monday when it opens at 7:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 09 34 41

Topa Sukaldería

At Aguirre Miramón 7, this is the Basque-South American casual and “accessible-to-all-budgets” offspring brought to Donostia by 2-Michelin starred Adoni Aduriz of Mugaritz and his IXO group. Aduriz wanted to celebrate the cooking of the Basques who immigrated to Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, creating an interchange of Basque and Latin American cuisine. The setting for this *eusko-americano* hybrid, however, couldn't be more contemporary: a vast open space with bright murals, walls lined with recycled wood, bare high and low blond Nordic-style tables, open kitchen and with a space for DJ sets on Sundays. On the menu you'll find tacotalos al pastor, quesadillas, make-your-own guacamole, moles, tiraditos, arepas, ceviche and plenty of cocktails, including pisco sours, sangrias and *euskojitos* prepared with txakolí instead of rum. Open daily from 11:00 am-midnight and until 1:00 am on Friday/Saturday.

Tel: (+34) 943 569 143

Café Kursaal

This bar-restaurant, facing the river at Ramón María Lili 2, is headed up by talented Mexican chef Juan Veloz Dávila. His casual café offers menu items prepared on a Jospier stove, such as mushroom-filled quesadillas with guacamole, tacos al pastor, grilled shrimp with

tamarindo sauce, chicken and pork pozole and cochinita pibil, his signature dish. The chef also offers a solid value daily lunch *menú del día*. Open daily from 9 am-11:30 pm.

Tel: (+34) 35 93 21

Bodega Donostiarra

At Calle Peña y Goñi, 13, with picture windows painted in bright blue, this lively spot founded in 1928 in an old wine warehouse, again draws a primarily local crowd, and is known for its *Gilda*, Donostia's signature pintxo consisting of an anchovy, green chili and olive on a toothpick. The "Gilda" is a reference to the Glenn Ford, Rita Hayworth film, *Gilda*, of 1946. Another favorite is the "*Indurain*", as in the 5-time Tour de France champion cyclist from Navarra, which is a pintxo of albacore, with five *guindilla* peppers and a slice of raw onion. Here the owners also serve delicious individual potato omelets, *tortilla española*, that can be prepared with ham, chorizo or even cheese, all made to order. And the most popular items on the menu are its skewers: brochettes of charcoal grilled meats, octopus and prawns and grilled vegetable platters to be shared. There is table seating with wait service (typical of the classic bars in the Gros quarter) and an outdoor terrace. Open Monday-Thursday from 9:30 am to 11:00 pm, and Friday and Saturday until midnight.

Tel: (+34) 943 011 380

Hidalgo 56*

Walk down Peña y Goñi, take a left onto Paseo Colón to #15 with the yellow awning, and you'll find Hidalgo 56, opened in 2005 by Michelin-starred chef Juan Mari Hidalgo. This much-loved local's haunt serves some of the very best foie gras in town. Here you can sit out on the terrace or feast inside on pintxos or *raciones* (larger plates that can be shared by 2) or have a tasting menu of pintxos. Juan Mari's specialty is the artistically presented *Begi-aundi*, which is a large squid filled with a ratatouille made also with squid, accompanied by a little shot glass of green onion foam. Other original dishes: a "mojito with a twist", a glass of tomato juice with fresh basil leaves and Iberian ham, and a *volcán de morcilla con yema, pasas y manzana*, a purée of black pudding with an egg yolk, raisins and apple. You'll find this spot packed to the rafters on the weekends, with a primarily local crowd, especially during Jazzaldea, the Heineken Jazz Festival, in July, the Quincena Musical Festival in August and the September International film Festival because of proximity to the Kursaal Center venue. Closed Sunday nights and Tuesday, first week of February and last two weeks of June.

Tel: (+34) 943 279 654 / 627 591 804

Bar-Restaurante Aitzgorri*

This pintxos bar, with high tables and bar stools at street level, and a very pretty basement restaurant is found across the street from Gatzupa (above) at Usandizaga 20, in the original space of Narru. Stand out pintxos: the black pudding, morcilla, from Olano, the prawn brochette, the duck meatballs and the *Dúo Cantábrico*, a double anchovy canapé. The bar also offers a selection of vermouths. The farm-to-table restaurant, with vegetable hailing from its own garden, conveniently offers full dishes and half plates and a special degustation menu for 43€, including wine. The restaurant comes Repsol guide recommended, and the bar has received a coveted Barandilla de Plata award for excellence from the Instituto del Pintxo, along with the Más Gastronomía Restaurante Revelación award. The bar opens daily except for Monday and the restaurant is closed Sunday and Wednesday nights and all day Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 359 896

Matalauva*

This tiny but exceptional haute cuisine bar is “smoke free”, in that doesn’t even have a stove in its 27 square meters. Its chef, Borja García, who has worked for many years in I+D department for the 3-Michelin starred Akelaře, decided in 2017 to open this diminutive spot at Zabaleta 17 in Gros, in a former tavern that had lost its cooking license. Thus Borja depends on his microwave and his skilled sous-vide techniques for the innovative creations, which contain no more than 3 ingredients each. His *materia prima* comes from the very same top purveyors as Akelaře. Inside you’ll find a small bar with a chalkboard menu listing around 14 seasonal items, two tiny 2-top tables and outside, a covered terrace. The best way to dine here is to put yourself in the hands of this creative chef and allow him to prepare a tasting menu for you, as much or as little as you desire. Repsol guide and *Academia Vasca de Gastronomía* recommended.

Tel: (+34) 943 84 68 17

Casa Senra Donosti

This is a true classic, a charmingly old style bar at Calle San Francisco, 32, with an outdoor terrace, traditional beams and bare trestle tables, offering a groaning board of pintxos displayed on the counter. Highlights here include the grilled squid on a bed of chestnut purée drizzled with black squid ink, a *champi con foie*, a mushroom filled with foie gras in an alioli sauce, a large shrimp with bacon and potatoes, and its several different croquettes. The house offers a large chalkboard menu with hot pintxos and baguettes, with several choices for vegetarians. Open daily from 10:00 am to 11:30 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 359 984 / 662 088 785

Bar Bergara*

Just off Calle Birmingham at General Artetxe, 8, you'll find this outstanding pintxos bar, with white communal wood tables for sit-down pintxos sampling, and wait service. The congenial founder, Patxi Bergara, and his nephews take great pride in the beauty of the establishment and the quality of your experience. It also has a small terrace with several tables set under an awning. This is a much-loved-by-the-locals classic (opened in 1950) and the only pioneer remaining in Gros of the "miniature haute cuisine movement", since the closing of Aloña Berri down the street. It was a favorite of the late Duchess of Alba who used to summer in the city. They serve award-winning miniature haute cuisine pintxos, but not meant to be shared, as each little jewel-like morsel consists of no more than two mouthfuls, a benchmark of miniature cuisine. Two star pintxos: the *txapela* and the *txalupa*. Try the pintxos tasting menu for 18€. They even have a menu in Japanese. Bergara has also won a Barandilla de Oro award for quality from the Instituto del Pintxo. The kitchen is open daily from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm and 6:00 to 11:00 pm. Closed 15 days in March and November.

Tel: (+34) 943 275 026



A Downtown Pintxos Crawl

Pintxos in El Centro

Antonio Bar*

Somewhat of a secret gem in the pintxos bar circuit, found downtown at Bergara, 3, (red façade with black awning), it offers fantastic creations and shouldn't be missed. Don't judge this simply fantastic bar by its rather humble appearance, hidden as it is behind a somewhat undistinguished red and black exterior with window open to the street, as inside you'll find some of the city's most spectacular little dishes. The folks here work exclusively with what's freshest and best at the market, and they source from the finest purveyors. Here the product is king. Their fish comes from Coro Sotero in San Martín market, their meats from an exclusive Tolosa butcher and mushrooms, beans, cheeses and vegetables from the gourmet Aitor Lasa, and of course, Iberian ham from Joselito. Three pintxos we love: Cantabrian sea anchovies with roasted green pepper confit over a slice of bread dripped with olive oil, the *Igueldo*, consisting of anchovies, ventresca, tomato and a guindilla pepper, and the prawn ravioli in Martini sauce. Divine! And Antonio bar pours the best draft beer in town. The chef, José Ramón Ezkurdia, chef of Restaurante Urepel until it closed in 2012 (now recently reopened) honed his skills at Akela. He also won a Barandilla de Oro award for excellence

from the Instituto del Pintxo. Antonio Bar makes for a great Monday evening stop when many of the acclaimed pintxos bars of the Parte Vieja close up shop. Down a narrow winding staircase you'll find a small 6-table restaurant and a space for private dining for up to 14. Open from 7:30 am-11:30 pm. Open Monday-Saturday from 7:30 am to 11:00 pm. Closed Sundays and holidays.

Tel: (+34) 943 429 815

Bar La Espiga

Another of our favorites, and a city classic from 1928, can be found at Calle San Marical, 48. It mostly eschews the "groaning board" of pintxos and instead offers freshly made cooked-to-order treats and plates of the day, along with a more formal dining space in the basement. The chef serves paella every Saturday after 1:30 pm. Its signature pintxos: *La Chorrera*, a hot pintxo of breaded egg, cheese and ham, and *Jalisco*, made with ham and mushrooms in the shape of a Mexican sombrero. Open daily from 10:00 am to midnight.

Tel: (+34) 943 421 423

Zazpi Bar*

Along with the ever-popular La Espiga, also on Calle San Marcial at number 7, we recommend the newly renovated bar-restaurant *Zazpi* (number 7 in Basque) with two young rising stars at the helm. The chef, Paul Arrillaga, won the gold medal during the prestigious Gipuzkoa pintxos competition in 2014. Among its delicious pintxos are two standouts: the *ravioli cremoso de rabo*, a creamy ravioli of ox tail and filet mignon with pepper sauce, *solomillo*. And here you'll find desserts such as chocolate cake, rice pudding and quince with baked apple, cheese and orange blossom. *Zazpi* offers a seasonal tasting menu for 40€, consisting of 6 small plates and 2 desserts and an outdoor terrace in the summer. Recommended by master chef Luis Irizar. It recently received a Barandilla de Oro award for outstanding quality from the Instituto del Pintxo. Open Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 11:00 am and Saturday from 9:00 am-12:00 pm. Closed Sunday.

Tel: (+34) 943 506 767 / 651 563 956

Casa Vallés

At Calle de los Reyes Católicos, 10, behind the Buen Pastor Cathedral, Vallés is a San Sebastián institution, one of the city's most charming old-style bar and grill houses. Founded in 1942, it is supposedly where the famous *gilda* pintxo was invented. Special dishes include deep fried mussels and prawns and its Iberian ham from Jabugo. It also offers *raciones* and *bocadillos* (baguettes). There is an outdoor terrace. Open daily from 9:00 am to 11:00 pm, 11:30 pm on Friday and Saturday.

Tel: (+34) 943 452 210



Small Plates In Antiguo

Vinoteca Bernardina*

Our go-to spot for a well chosen selection wines by the glass and fabulous prepared-to-order pintxos and small plates can't be found in the fabled pintxos bar filled Old Quarter but instead in the aristocratic neighborhood of *Antiguo*, just south of Ondarreta beach (the city's original residential district) at Vitoria-Gasteiz, 6. For our money this is the city's most inviting wine/gastro bar/small bistrot. We love their baby limas served with Joselito Iberian ham, their scrambled eggs with Burgos black pudding, their individual tortillas (*jamón*, *chorizo* or *patatas*), baby vegetables in tempura, Grandma's *ensaladilla rusa con salmón*, Russian salad topped with salmon, and their mini oxen and bluefin tuna hamburgers (*buey* and *atún rojo*). You can count on gracious, attentive service, a stylish setting, an interesting, well heeled local crowd and excellent cuisine magically prepared in the tiniest of kitchens. Bernardina is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, 9:00 am on Saturday. Open Monday-Saturday for pintxos or dinner from 7:30 to midnight. Closed Sunday.

Tel: (+34) 943 314 899

Damadá Gastroteka*

This recent venture by Sevillano and Michelin-starred chef David Arellano, who honed his skills under Martín Berasategui ([Lasarte](#), [eMe Be Garrote](#)), and his wife Mariana Morán, can be found at Calle Tolosa, 9, directly across from the NH Collection Aránzazu Hotel. This contemporary gastro bar, with clean lines done in black and white, makes for an outstanding choice for an excellent value lunch or dinner away from the heavily tourist-filled Old Quarter or trendy Gros. His original dishes, such as raw scallops with ponzu sauce and sturgeon caviar from the Navarrese Pyrenees and his Duxelle mushroom and cream-stuffed raviolis, display his considerable creativity. His Galician beef comes from one of Spain's finest purveyors, Luismi. You can dine here for lunch on small plates, or to sample the full range of his talents, splurge on his 7-course seasonal tasting menu, priced at 48€. You can read the recent review in the [Guía Repsol](#). Closed Sunday evenings and Monday.

Tel: (+34) 843 631 856



Dining in San Sebastián-Donostia

The Michelin stars

Andoni Aduriz's [Mugaritz](#) in Errentería, the most cerebral and cutting-edge, [Restaurant Martín Berasategui](#) in Lasarte (whose chef boasts 10 Michelin stars in his dining empire), Hilario Arbelaitz's [Zuberoa](#) in Oiartzun, by far the most traditional of the Michelin stars, are all located in the suburbs, while the Txapategi brothers, Mikel, Kepa and Gorka's [Restaurant Alameda](#) is found in Hondarribia and Aitor Arregui's [Elkano](#) is situated in Getaria. All sit a taxi ride away from the center of the city, but very worth the experience. Pedro Subijana's [Akelaře](#), a Relais & Chateaux, and one of our personal favorites, sits on the slope of Mount Igueldo overlooking the Bay of Biscay, 15 minutes by taxi from the old town. Juan Mari's acclaimed [Restaurant Arzak](#) is a convenient 15-minute walk from the [Hotel Villa Soro](#), or a 10-minute taxi ride from the [Hotel Maria Cristina](#). The other top Michelin star destinations within the city are Dani López's [Restaurante Kokotxa](#) in the Old Quarter, 3rd generation chef Rubén Trincado's [Mirador de Ulía](#), with the best views of the city, and the new addition in 2017, Paulo Airaudó's [Amelia](#), in the Romantica district (soon to move to the yet-to-be-finished Hotel Villa Favorita at Zubieta 26 facing La Concha beach).

Creative and Contemporary Cuisine

San Sebastián has a number of other excellent restaurants offering everything from award-winning haute cuisine to the more traditional market-driven cuisine that has made the Basque Country a major destination for foodies.

[Biarritz Bar and Restaurant](#)

Conveniently located at 56 Paseo de la Concha, in the [Hotel Niza](#), the Biarritz bar looks out over La Concha Bay. The downstairs restaurant, designed and remodeled by architects Silvia Méndez Vigo, Jon Essery and Ana Chillida, has been placed recently in the capable hands of chef David Agüero, who was second-in-command at Narru, the former occupant. He offers a 35,50€ menu, including wine, during the week, available Tuesday-Thursday for both lunch and dinner and Friday for lunch. Closed Sunday night and Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 426 663

Iñigo Peña's [Restaurant Narru](#) will be relocating to the ground floor of the new, 50-room, 4-star Hotel Basati, Plaza del Buen Pastor, which is due to open by the end of this year.

[Casa Urola*](#)

Chef Pablo Loureiro's landmark restaurant (founded in 1956) at Fermín Calbetón, 20, one of our very favorites in Donosti, offers stylish dining in the upstairs dining room, along with very high quality *pintxos* in its renovated downstairs bar. Although not inexpensive, Pablo's creations, including his *txapelas de hongo a la parilla con yema de huevo, salsa de pato y piñones* (grilled wild mushrooms with egg yolk, duck sauce and pine nuts), are quite memorable and worth the moderate splurge. Chef Pablo, who took over the restaurant in 2012, is a member of the *Sukatalde* group of chefs from Gipuzkoa. He has earned 2 Repsol suns. Anthony Bourdain filmed a segment of his *Parts Unknown: Basque Country*, here and he dined on seared mushrooms with egg yolk and pine nuts, grilled tuna, peas in a consommé of Iberico ham and squid. The upstairs restaurant opens for lunch from 1:45 pm to 4:00 pm and for dinner from 8:15 to 11:00 pm. Closed all day Tuesday, the second half of February, July 1-10, and the last 10 days in November.

Tel: (+34) 943 441 371

[Bodegón Alejandro](#)

Fermín Calbetón, 4, is where 3-Michelin starred chef, Martín Berasategui honed his skills at his family's former restaurant, now belonging to the IXO group of Michelin-starred chef Aduriz of Mugaritz. The cozy basement restaurant presents the same high quality of service and care with presentation for which the other members of the IXO group are noted. Chef Inaxio Valverde offers an excellent small plates tasting menu for 52€, with the optional wine pairing for 19,50€/person. His particular specialty: game dishes in season. Repsol,

Recommended in the Repsol Guide, the Michelin Guide for 2019 and the [Academia Vasca de Gastronomía](#). Open for lunch from 1:00-3:30 and for dinner from 8:00-10:30 pm. Open daily during from April 23 until November 3. Annual closing: from January 22 to February 7, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Tel: (+34) 943 427 158

[Bokado Mikel Santamaría](#)

At the Aquarium at Plaza Jacques Cousteau sits a member of the highly regarded Bokado catering group, which also supplies the pintxos bar [Bokado San Telmo](#) in the San Telmo Museum. If you don't normally associate haute cuisine with an aquarium, well, think again! The chefs here are two brothers, Mikel and Jesús Santamaría, who have a partnership with Arzak. The views here just couldn't be more panoramic, facing La Concha bay at the foot of Mount Urgell. Their Bokado tasting menu runs 54€ with wine included, and the market menu is priced at 62€, wine not included. The restaurant also offers a cafeteria bar where one can feast on pintxos and sandwiches, their *bokados*. It has received 1 Repsol sun and is highly recommended in the [Academia Vasca de Gastronomía](#). Open for lunch from 1:30 to 3:30 pm and for dinner from 9:00 to 11:00 pm, closed Tuesday and Sunday nights, all day Monday, and 15 days in November.

Tel: (+34) 94953 431 842

[Eme Be Garrote*](#)

Hidden away in the Igara neighborhood of the Antiguo quarter, in the former Urkiola cider house at Camino de Igara, 33, this charming spot, now bestowed with 1 Michelin star and 1 Repsol sun, belongs to 10-Michelin starred chef, Martín Berasategui. (His initials in Spanish: Eme Be). Berasategui opened this, his most affordable dining spot in Spain, in 2013 and installed talented David Arellano as his executive chef. In addition to his Michelin star awarded in 2018, Arellano has received the local Premio Talento Gastro "Best Chef" award for 2019. The design maintains some of the original cider house trappings including the enormous barrels or *kupelas*, while updating the space with a minimalist Nordic look (*euskandinavo*-style), with bare, blond wood tables, generously set apart and large, and inverted hanging apple baskets functioning as lamp shades. The beef comes from one of Spain's foremost purveyors, Luisi Garayar; thus, the standout menu items to order here are the rib steak for two, *txuleta*, or the filet mignon, *solomillo*. The exceptionally high quality, 5-course executive lunch menu, served Tuesday to Friday, costs 45€ with optional wine pairing for 20€. The tasting menu is priced at 95€. Closed Sunday evenings and all day Monday, plus September 5-20, October 3 (San Sebastián Gastronomy) November 1, and December 5 and 21-25.

Tel: (+34) 943 227 971

Agorregi

Also in the Igara neighborhood, at Portuetxe, 15, this fine value spot is another insider tip from our friend Gabriella of Tenedor Tours. The two owners, Gorka Areclus and his wife Beatriz, alumni of Bodegón Alejandro (under Martín Berasategui), Arzak and Akelañe, offer warm hospitality. The desserts are quite acclaimed. They offer a two tasting menus priced at 44€, including a 1/2 bottle of wine/person, and 59€, wine not included, along with a 3-course lunch *menú del día* with wine & coffee included for only 25€. It receives plenty of fine press, as well as being awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand in November 2013 and one Repsol sun. Opens for lunch from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm and for dinner from 8:30 to 11:00 pm. Closed on Sunday and Monday and Tuesday nights, except for summer when it opens Monday nights.

Tel: (+34) 943 224 328

Rekondo*

Take a taxi to the slopes of Mount Igeldo to Paseo de Igeldo, 57, to this classic asador, a traditional Basque *caserío*, or farmhouse, that has become a Mecca for wine lovers and carnivores alike. It specializes in charcoal grilled meats and game dishes prepared by chef Iñaki Arrieta, and his baked spider crab dish, *txangurro*, and rice with clams, *arroz con almejas*, are legendary. Rekondo boasts a wine cellar of more than 127,000 bottles, supervised by Argentinian sommelier Martín Flea, which in 2011, was recognized by Wine Spectator as being one of the 5 best wine cellars in the world. It was also declared the best wine cellar for 2016 by *La revue de vin de France*, the oldest viticulture magazine in the world (1927). Opened by the Rekondo family in 1964, it is now run by the second generation. You'll find a lovely terrace for al fresco dining (weather permitting) overlooking the bay. The restaurant has added a gastro-bar where diners can enjoy a pintxo and wines by the glass before their meal. Try the warm apple tart for dessert. It has consistently earned 1 Repsol sun from the prestigious Repsol Guide, a yearly Grand Award from Wine Spectator, and King Emeritus Juan Carlos is a fan. Open for lunch from 1:00 to 3:30 and dinner from 8:30-11:30 pm. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday, 15 days in June and November.

Tel: (+34) 943 212 907

Galerna Jan Edan

This exciting and adventurous newcomer is under the direction of two young chefs, Rebeca Barainca from La Mancha and Jorge Asenjo from Madrid, who were nominated for Upcoming Chef of the Year at Madrid Fusion 2019. The restaurant was also bestowed in 2019 with a Bib Gourmand distinction in the Michelin guide and comes Repsol guide recommended. You'll find them at Paseo de Colón 46 in the Gros district. Closed all day Tuesday and Wednesday lunch.

Tel: (+34) 943 278 839

Zelai Txiki*

Take a taxi up to the slopes of Monte Ulía to Travesía Rodil 9 for atmospheric dining at this lovely grill house, housed in a century-old Basque farmhouse with expansive covered outdoor terrace. Chef Juan Carlos Cano's menu features house made charcuterie, roasts, such as suckling pig and baby lamb, sourced from Segovia and Burgos, prepared in their wood burning oven along with their bread, vegetables from their own garden and superb fish and *txuleta* from Carnicas Guikar grilled over charcoal. And the homemade desserts, such as the warm apple tart, *pastel vasco*, *pantxineta* and caramelized *torrija*, shouldn't be missed. Zelai has deservedly earned one sun from the Repsol guide and is a favorite of two Michelin starred Adoni Aduriz of Mugaritz. Zelai and Rekondo with their terraces overlooking the city make perfect destinations for a romantic summer night's dinner. Closed Monday and Wednesday nights and all day Tuesday.

Tel: (+34) 943 274 622

La Muralla

Stroll over to the Old Quarter to this intimate restaurant at Embeltrán, 3, where the cities 12th-century fortress wall (its *muralla*) once stood. It serves up a 40€ lunch menu during the week, priced at 41€ on the weekend, with several options for each course. Opens daily from 1:00-3:30 pm for lunch and for dinner from 20:30-11:00 pm. La Muralla and La Fábrica share the same owners, the brother/sister team of Iñigo and María Eugenia Bozal, who also own Urepel. Repsol guide recommended.

Tel: (+34) 943 433 508

La Fábrica

Or try its equally cozy and charming sister restaurant of La Muralla at Calle de Puerto, 17, where during the week you will also find a great value 33€ menu, including wine, plus a child's menu for 15€. Open daily except for Sunday night with the same hours as La Muralla.

Tel: (+34) 943 432 110

Urepel

Under the same ownership as La Muralla and La Fábrica, this historic restaurant, at Paseo Salamanca, 3, bajo, offers equally fine dining at a moderate price in a gracious setting on two floors. During the week, Monday-Thursday for both lunch and dinner, chef Laín Suárez offers a 35€ menu and a 20€ child's menu. This menus is also offered on Friday for lunch. Recommended in the Repsol guide and by Woody Allen who visited recently while filming in the city. Open daily from lunch from 1:00 to 3:30 pm and for dinner from 8:30 to 11:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 420 723

Xarma Cook & Culture

At Calle Miguel Imaz, 1, this is the new and hip gourmet destination in the Gros neighborhood run by a very talented couple Aizpea Oihaneder and Xabier Díez Esteibar, members of Sukatalde, the association of young chefs of Gipuzkoa and recipients of two prestigious Repsol suns. This restaurant with its casual, more roguish, industrial design theme has received a number of excellent reviews since moving from the Antiguo district and has garnered two Repsol suns. You'll find a pintxos bar on the ground floor with the dining room seating 70 with its open kitchen in the lower level, decorated with furnishings brought from Indonesia. In its new space this talented duo opts for a more fusion-type cuisine. Their Kutxi tasting menu is priced at 60€. Xarma opens from 11:00 am to midnight, Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, and later on Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Tuesdays.

Tel: (+34) 943 142 267

Juanito Kojua

The oldest restaurant in the Parte Vieja (1947), at Calle Puerto, 14, is very popular with locals. It's warm and homey, serving traditional Basque fare, such as *alubias de Tolosa*, a black bean stew and hake cheeks, *kokotxas de merluza*. The dining room upstairs sports a nautical theme, while downstairs the lovely stone walled dining room is decorated farmhouse style. Now belonging to the Garrancho group, it still offers fairly reasonable prices for quite ample portions. The traditional 5-course tasting menu is priced at 58€ + VAT. Both Michelin and Repsol recommended. Open for lunch from 1:00 to 3:30 and for dinner from 8:00-11:00. Closed Sunday evening.

Tel: (+34) 943 420 180

Astelena 1997

At Calle Euskal Herria, 3, you'll find good price to quality ratio, updated Basque classics and great homemade desserts. The fine steaks come from Carnicas Goya in Tolosa. Chef Ander González offers a Tuesday-Friday executive lunch menu for 33€, including wine and VAT, an a la carte menu and a degustacion menu for 50€. The Repsol guide has bestowed Astelena 1997 with 1 Repsol sun. It's located at the eastern end of the Parte Vieja quarter, just 3 blocks from the Kursaal Center and Zurriola Bridge. Open for lunch at 1:30 and dinner at 8:30. Closed Sunday dinner, all day Monday and Wednesday lunch. The owners of Astelena also offer a gastrobar-restaurant, [Astelena 148](#) on the Plaza de la Constitución with outdoor terrace.

Tel: (+34) 943 425 867

Aldanondo

At Euskal Herria, 6, across the street from Astelena, Aldanondo is another popular dining room in the Old Quarter that fell into decline, closed but has been recently reopened by chef Mikel Mayán. The name of the game here at this *asador*: simply prepared charcoal grilled meats and fish. This grill house is known for its oxen steak for 2, *chuleta de buey*, grilled over vegetable charcoal, seasoned with sea salt, priced at €48/kilo and accompanied by sautéed green Gernika peppers, French fries or salad (5€ extra). Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch from 1:00 to 3:30 pm and for dinner from 8:15 to 10:30 pm. Open Sunday for lunch only and closed all day Monday.

Tel: 943 45 82 11

La Rampa

Located next to the Aquarium on the pier at Muelle, 26-27 bajo, this is an informal, open air seafood “shack” with a tiny interior dining room offering with paper tablecloths and napkins but offering prime ingredients. It offers quick service if you don’t have the time or inclination, for leisurely dining. Favorably reviewed by Rafael García Santos, Spain’s foremost food and wine critic, and is recommended in the [Academia Vasca de Gastronomía](#). Try their squid croquettes, *croquetas de txipirón* and grilled grouper (*mero*), sole (*lenguado*), or rodaballo (*turbot*). Open from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm for lunch and 8:00 to 11:00 pm for dinner. Closed Tuesday and Sunday evenings and all day Wednesday.

Tel: (+34) 943 421 652

Gastronomic Splurges Outside The City

Restaurant Fagollaga

Outside of the grim, industrial village of Hernani, at Ereñozu Auzoa, 68, you have yet another country hideaway in a pretty Basque farmhouse founded by the chef's great grandmother in 1904. *Fagollaga* means "place of many beech trees" in Basque. Just follow the signs to the Goizueta highway. The restaurant, with two Repsol signs, is on the road, alongside the Urumea River, and has a beautiful glass enclosed terrace. Of all the gourmet temples in this area, this is the one most reasonably priced. It also has a very good pastry chef. It offers fine service and ample portions. In recognition of chef Ixak Salaberria's talent and potential, Spain's most influential restaurant guide, [Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía](#), ranks Fagollaga just a half-point below Arzak, and has [two Repsol signs](#). Chef Ixak still offers a Tuesday-Friday business lunch menu for 27,50€ wine + VAT, a weekend menu for 39.95€ and a tasting menu for 79€, VAT included. Open for lunch Tuesday-Sunday from 1:15 to 3:30 pm and for dinner Friday and Saturday at 8:30, closed on Monday, during Holy Week and one week at Christmas.

Tel: (+34) 943 550 031

Asador Bedua

If you aren't able to snag a table at arguable Spain's very finest seafood grills, Elkano, in Getaria, but want to experience another one of the north's best grill houses, for both beef and fish, you may wish to head to Asador Bedua, just a 15-minute drive away from Getaria, to the west of the neighboring village of Zumaia. This *asador* has gained recent notoriety, as one of the most popular scenes of the movie [Cien Apellidos Vascos](#), "A Spanish Affair", the most viewed Spanish film of all time, was shot here. The décor of this ancient, 12th-century red stone building is elegantly rustic, with ancient wood beams and stone walls decorated with oil paintings and soft lighting. It boasts its own vegetable garden, and of course, a large outdoor grill, where master griller, José Mari Iriondo, prepares perfectly grilled fish and also an acclaimed *txuletón* (rib steak), and his wife, Isabel Andia, prepares the homemade desserts, (as cheese cake, ice creams, *pantxineta*) along with their delicious potato omelet, *tortilla española*, which has won a national award. And "The Best of Spanish Gastronomy", *Lo Mejor de la Gastronomía*, blog declares the restaurant's rib steak as one of the country's top fifteen.

Tel: (+34) 943 860 551 / 605 718 090

You can reach this isolated grill house from Zumaia following the N-634, at the circle going west out of town, you'll see a large brown sign on your left, "Asador Bedua", *Bedua* being the name of the neighborhood. Then once you've made the turn to the left, look closely on your

left for another sign pointing down a narrow road. Asador Bedua sits below at the end of this road, along the river.

Singular Iñigo Lavado

Next door to Hondarribia, in the neighboring village of Irún, at Avenida Iparralde, 43, in the Ficoba Exhibition Center, is where you will find friendly Chef Iñigo Lavado's gastronomic destination. Here he offers traditional Basque cuisine with a blend of flavors from around the world after learning his trade in the kitchens of Martín Berasategui, Ferrán Adriá, Pedro Subijana, Alain Ducasse and his mentor, Luis Irizar. Lavado received one Repsol sun and is Michelin recommended. He offers a 28€ lunch menu Monday-Friday and a 4-course Bidasoa menu for only 35€. Open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch from 12:30 to 4:00 pm, and Fridays and Saturdays for dinner at 8:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 639 639

Felix Manso Ibarla

Chef Felix Manso is called "the Druid" because it's said he makes magic in his kitchen. We discovered him while watching EiTb's series on Basque cuisine "*Juego de cartas*". Dine indoors or relax on the terrace and treat yourself to the chef's 6-course market driven tasting menu, which changes daily. Also located in Irún at Barrio Meaka, 9, the restaurant is open from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm daily except Tuesdays, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 11:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 841 964

Asador Trinkete Borda

Also on the outskirts of Irún, you'll find another traditional, 29-year old grill house or *erretegia*, specializing in grilled meats (Kobe beef raised on their own farm in Hondarribia) and fish. Like Bedua above, Trinkete Borda is yet another *txuleta* temple, well loved by Basques and gourmands-in-the-know but unlike the fabled Julián de Tolosa, not internationally famous. Vegetables come from their own garden. It's found in the middle of the forest, housed in an 18th-century farmhouse with inclosed pelota court (*trinkete*). Repsol guide recommended. It's also a favorite of 2-Michelin starred Adoni Aduriz of Mugaritz. Standout desserts include the warm cheesecake and *leche frita*. Open daily except Tuesdays for lunch from 2:00 to 4:00 pm and for dinner from 9:00 to 11:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 623 235

Dining On Mondays

Mondays are always difficult for sampling the city's top tables as most noted restaurants are closed, but there are some notable exceptions. Here are my suggestions for Monday dinner if you don't want to do the *pintxos* route, although several of my favorite *pintxos* bars are also closed on Mondays.

[La Muralla](#), Embeltrán, 3

Tel: (+34) 943 433 508

[La Fábrica](#), Puerto, 17

Tel: (+34) 943 432 110

[Urepel](#), Paseo Salamanca, 3, bajo

Tel: (+34) 943 420 723

[Casa Urola](#), Fermín Calbetón, 20

Tel: (+34) 943 441 371

[Bodegón Alejandro](#), Fermín Calbetón, 4

Tel: (+34) 943 427 158

[Gandarias](#), 31 de agosto, 23

Tel: (+34) 943 426 362

[Rekondo](#), Paseo de Igueldo, 57

Tel: (+34) 943 212 907

[Xarma Cook & Culture](#), Calle Miguel Imaz, 1

Tel: (+34) 943 142 267

[Agorregi](#), Portuetxe, 15 (June through September, dinners only)

Tel: (+34) 943 224 328

[Juanito Kojua](#), Calle Puerto, 14

Tel: (+34) 943 420 180

[La Rampa](#), Muelle, 26-27 bajo

Tel: (+34) 943 421 652

[Zelai Txiki](#), Travesía Rodil, 79 (lunch only)

Tel: (+34) 943 274 622



Excursions West Of San Sebastián Zarautz

A kind of a mini-San Sebastián, Zarautz's 2500 meter long crescent shaped beach, 15 kilometers west of Donostia, is the longest in the Basque Country, and will be filled with bathing tents and families during the summer when the village of 22,000 nearly triples in size. It's also a favorite of the surfing crowd and celebrity surfers, such as Aussie Simon Baker, who has been spotted there riding the waves. This is also home of the famous Basque TV chef [Karlos Arguiñano](#), whose this historic 12-room hotel, [Villa Aiala](#), has some rooms facing the beach.

What to see and do in Zarautz

The [Fiestas de la Virgen](#) is celebrated the middle of August, while Euskal Jaiak is celebrated in honor of the [Virgin of Aranzazu](#) from the August 31 to September 9, along with the Euskal Jaiak (Basque Feast) a celebration of everything Basque. Mount Talaimendi stands at the eastern end of the beach. It was once a lookout point for whale hunting and from here you can see the small rocky island of Mollarri in the bay. At the western end of the beach is mount Santa Barbara, where there is a path leading up to the hermitage for even more spectacular views.

Visit to a Txakolí winery

Bodega K5

Just 9 km from Zarautz in Aia, 300 meters above the Cantabrian sea, you'll find the Alonso & Balaguer-designed winery surrounded by 15 hectares of vineyards and a chestnut, oak and beech forest. Opened in 2005, here, chef Arguiñano produces only two wines, both outstanding, the K Pilota and K5 Argiñano. Visits are by reservations only.

Tel: (+34) 943 240 005 / 667 774 270

Bodega Talai Berri

This small family-run winery with 12 hectares located on the sunny hills above Zarautz produces both red and white txakolí and *orujo* (a grappa-like liqueur) along with 2 types of vinegars. Visits here require a prior reservation and are held on Fridays/Saturdays only at 11:00 am. The tastings are complimented by local tuna, Navarran chorizo and Idiazábal cheese.

Tel: (+34) 943 132 750



Getaria

Founded in 1204, the medieval walled village of Getaria, 3 kilometers west of Zarautz, is one of the oldest villages in Gipuzkoa. During the middle Ages whale hunting was the village's main pursuit, but today it is the center of txakolí wine production on the Basque coast. The village is the birthplace of Juan Sebastián Elcano, who was the first person to circumnavigate the world, finishing Magellan's voyage, of Domingo Bonaetxea, the conqueror of Haiti, and of Cristóbal Balenciaga, illustrious Parisian fashion designer. The 15th-century Gothic designed Iglesia del Salvador, the Church of San Salvador, which houses the tomb of Elcano, has an unusual heavily tilted wooden floor, designed so that the altar sits high above the pews. Getaria contains two of the 16 popular beaches along the Basque coast, Malkorbe beach on the east side of the port and Mount San Antón, known as the *Mouse of Getaria* (in the shape of a mouse) and Gaztetape beach on the west side.

There's a *txakoli* festival in Getaria on the first Sunday of August, if you find yourself in the vicinity at that time. Be sure to stop by [Salanort](#) Maestros Conserveros for their excellent selection of canned goods: Atlantic octopus, anchovies and tuna belly products from Getaria. And next to the pier, below the Asador Astillero, drop into the anchovy shop, [Maisor](#), where you can visit their workshop, sample their excellent anchovies and purchase other gourmet

products including excellent txakolís. And for more txakolí labels and other local canned goods, check the nice selection at the [Amona María](#) delicatessen next to the Restaurante Mayflower.

What to see in Getaria

In the village, perched on the hill, at Aldamar Parkea, 6, you'll find [Cristóbal Balenciaga Museoa](#), the fashion museum displaying the costumes, ball gowns, and couture creations of the famous Getaria native. In this fascinating display you'll find ball gowns designed for various and sundry aristocrats and the wedding dress of Generalissimo Francisco Franco's granddaughter, Carmen. The museum offers free 1-hour guided tours on weekends and public holidays on a first come, first served basis. The museum is open from November through February, Tuesday-Sunday, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, and from March through October, Tuesday-Sunday until 7:00 pm. It's open every day in July and August from 10:00 am until 8:00 pm. Tickets cost 10€, 7€ for seniors, free for children under 9.

Just west of Getaria is the fishing village of Zumaia, where in the afternoon you can visit Ignacio Zuloaga's [Espacio Cultural](#), open to the public on select dates only, March thru September (check the schedule), from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Zuloaga, a Basque, native of Eibar, was one of Spain's greatest painters and portrait artists of the late 19th century, a contemporary of Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec, whose works are quite somber and haunting in tone. He is well known for his portraits of the "typical" Spanish characters of his day, peasants, bullfighters and gypsies. There is also a new Museum-Shop of Artisanal Basque Products in Laia across the road from the Zuloaga Museum.

Lunch in Getaria

Getaria is renowned worldwide for its grilled fish, and at all the restaurants at the pier you'll find outdoor charcoal grills where they prepare their acclaimed grilled turbot.

[Elkano](#)*

Sitting in the very center of Getaria, this destination seafood restaurant, **awarded** 1 Michelin star and 2 Repsol suns, offers fabulous, world class dining. The *rodaballo* (turbot) here is superb, as is the *bogavante* (lobster). All of the fish are grilled on the outside *parrilla*. It and its cousin Kai-Kaipe are two of the best and most comfortable seafood restaurants along the entire coast! Elkano makes every gourmet critic's list of the top grill houses in Spain. Anthony Bourdain filmed a segment of his Parts Unknown: Basque Country here, where he dined on rock prawns, hake cheeks and turbot. Reservations must be made several months in advance, since it was named number 30 best restaurant in the world on the 2019 World's Best List! Closed all day Tuesday, plus closed Sunday/Monday for dinner. See their web page for yearly vacation closing dates.

Tel: (+34) 943 140 024 / 649 335 274

Elkano Txiki

For those who can't snag a table at the mother ship Asador Elkano, this innovative gastrobar of Aitor Arregi, son of the unforgettable Pedro Arregui, founder of Elkano, is an homage to his father and is housed in the original Asador Elkano space at Calle Elkano 13. Here you will find well-priced menu items such as pork cheeks with potato puré, Iberian pork loin with apple, a monkfish and prawn brochette, baked spider crab, tuna tataki and creamy rice with lobster. During the summer season it opens Wednesday-Sunday for pintxos, lunch and dinner.

Tel: (+34) 943 140 017

Kaia-Kaipe*

Elkano's "family member" is run by Aitor Arregui's cousin Ygor (born the same month of the same year), whose grandparents founded the restaurant in 1982. It was bestowed two Repsol suns for 2019 and is equally famed for its superb grilled fish, including turbot. It's located closer to the port at Calle de General Amao, 4, and offers vegetarian and Coeliac menus, along with its traditional grilled seafood menu, expertly prepared on the outdoor charcoal grills. It sports one of the Basque country's finest wine cellars with 40,000 bottles and over 1,000 different labels, its own seafood tanks, a beautiful nautical-themed upstairs dining room overlooking the water and a lovely covered outdoor terrace. If you fail to snag that coveted reservation at Elkano, Kaia-Kaipe makes for a more than acceptable substitute, offering you an equally fine seafood feast. There's little difference here in the quality. Opens for lunch at 1:00 pm and dinner at 8:00 pm. Closed Monday evenings and Wednesdays, except during the summer; also closed during the Christmas holidays, 14 days in February and 10 days in October.

Tel: (+34) 943 140 500

Txoko Getaria

This small and informal restaurant, open since 1953, sits by the side of Kaia-Kaipe and is now supervised by acclaimed chef Fleischmann of Bailara at the Hotel Iriarte Jauregia. His wife Maialen runs the day-to-day operation along with chef Manuel Doñelfa. For a change of pace from the two Getaria "temples" mentioned above, we chose to have lunch here in July and enjoyed very much our meal of grilled asparagus and a wonderful and ample black rice, *arroz negro*, which we couldn't finish but our server offered us a "take away" box. We accompanied our meal with a bottle of K5 Pilota txakolí. For those finding themselves in Getaria with a dining budget of 50€/person rather than 100€, Txoko is a solid bet. It's also a favorite of Michelin starred chef Elena Arzak.

Restaurante Iribar

This 7-room [Pensión](#)-Restaurant is another solid, traditional, family run option, managed for 30 years by Pili Manterola Iribar, whose grandfather founded the restaurant. In its two stories, it sports a farmhouse style interior décor, with its own outdoor charcoal grill and small terrace. It's located close to the port at Calle Nagusia, 34, and also offers vegetarian and Coeliac menus. Opens for lunch at 1:00 and dinner at 7:30. Recommend in the Repsol Guide. Closed Wednesday evenings and all day Thursday. Closes annually for 10 days in April, June, October and November.

Tel: (+34) 943 140 320

Bar Politena

This lively and quite attractive pintxos bar-small restaurant sits at Calle Nagusia 9 and remains our favorite for pintxos sampling before indulging in a Getaria turbot feast. The bar displays its pintxos on the bar in the traditional “groaning board” style, each skewered with a toothpick and priced equally. You'll find a few blue & white high top tables outside placed next to the outdoor grill and a pretty dining room in the back, also done in blue and white, where one can dine more formally. Politena offers an unbeatable 3-course daily menu for only 18€ , including cider or wine, with several choices for each course.

Tel: (+34) 943 89 60 24

Restaurante Baleari Txiringuito

This lively beachside shack, or *txiringuito*, fills with bathers and diners during the summer season, as it sits directly on Malkorbe beach and prices are quite reasonable. A couple can dine in high style easily for under 90€, including wine. It is both a bar and casual restaurant open daily during the season from 1:00-4:00 and 8:00-10:30 pm. Grilled hake, turbot, sea bream and octopus are some of its specialties. Repsol guide recommended. Reservations highly recommended in high season.

Tel: (+34) 943 14 02 54

Visiting a Txakolí winery in Getaria

If you decide to spend some time in Getaria, you have the possibility of visiting one or two of the local wineries belonging to the [Getariako Txakolina D.O.](#)

Gaintza Txakolindegia

This small family run winery-hotel sits on the hill at Barrio San Prudentzio, 26, overlooking the fishing village of Getaria. The grandfather, José Antonio originally made txakolí for family consumption and for sale in the nearby villages. The vineyards cover 25 hectares. All of the rooms in the B&B have views over the vineyards. Reservations required Monday-

Saturday (except holidays) from 11:30 am. The 90-minutes tour cost 16€, with a minimum of two, and includes a tasting of local anchovies and bonito del norte (tuna). They also offer lunch or dinner on Friday and Saturday, March, April and May (except during Holy Week) for 45€/person.

Tel: (+34) 943 140 032

[BodegaTxomín Etxaniz](#)

This famous, award-winning winery sits above the sea just to the east of Getaria at Barrio Eitzaga, 21. Here they produce their most well known white, a rosé, a barrel fermented white TX, two sparkling txakolis, white and rosé *Eugenia* and a late harvest *Uydi*. The 90-minute tours are 18€/person and include a tasting of different txakolí wines accompanied with anchovies and white tuna from Getaria. Open for visits Monday to Saturday, except for holidays.

Tel: (+34) 943 140 702

Other nearby wineries you can visit while in Getaria include [Bodega Akarregi Txiki](#), [Aizpurua](#), [Txakoli Ameztoi](#) and [Ulacia](#).

If you happen to be staying at the luxurious [Hotel Iturregi](#), you can walk down the road to visit the 10 hectares of sloping, trellised vineyards of [Gañeta](#), which are usually harvested at the beginning of October.

Getting to Getaria

To reach Getaria by bus from San Sebastián: Take the [Lurralde UK10 bus](#) that departs from the main bus station at Federico Garcia Lorca 2, stops at Avenida de Tolosa, 112, in the Antiguo district and then travels along the toll road making an intermediate stop in the center of Zarautz. Bus fare is 1,80€



Excursions East Of San Sebastián Hondarribia

Featured in “[The Most Beautiful Villages of Spain](#)” (Hugh Palmer 2003), Hondarribia is widely considered to be one of the most picturesque coastal villages in all of Spain. It boasts a charming and colorful La Marina quarter with its much photographed fishermen's homes of Calle San Pedro, adorned with green, blue and red shutters and geranium bedecked balconies, and a handsome historic walled medieval quarter overlooking the city, filled with aristocratic mansions and the Castle Parador Carlos V. Hondarribia's wide beach winds along the river to the coast and has excellent facilities for a family beach day. This seaside village makes an excellent base from which to spend several days exploring the French Basque countryside, the *Pays Basque*, the lush green valleys of neighboring Navarra, or the beautiful highlands of Gipúzkoa.

So whether you decide to stay in grand style at the 10th-century [Castle Parador](#) on the Plaza de Armas in the medieval quarter, the small boutique [Hotel Obispo](#) there or the lovely [Villa Magalean Hotel & Spa](#) downtown, or opt for something more simple but comfortable by staying at one of the [agrotourism homes](#), you'll be rewarded with lovely views, fantastic gourmet food, a lively fishing quarter for great pintxos sampling in the evening, nice

shopping and a friendly populace. There's also a modern sports complex, yacht harbor and fishermen's pier with restaurant, as well as several children's playgrounds on the way to the family beach. The tourist center for [Hondarribia-Irun and Bidasoa](#) is located in the Marina complex, and the Hondarribia Tourist Office is found in the historic quarter facing the Parador at Plaza de Armas 9.

When in residence, although we pick up grocery staples at the handy Erroski supermarket near the airport, we always head to the specialty shops downtown for our gourmet items. **One** can buy food and wine for a picnic at [Solbes](#), the gourmet food purveyor at Calle Santiago, 2, then head to pedestrians only Calle San Pedro in the fishermen's quarter, to the charcuterie Urdai-Azpikoak of Jon Alzaga at No. 45, which sells a great selection of Iberian hams and Pyrénées cheeses. For some of the best baguettes (*leñas*) I've every tasted in Spain, stop at [Panaderia Ogi-Berri](#), *Artesanos del Pan*, at Calle San Pedro, 69, in La Marina. At the end of Calle San Pedro you'll find a handy laundry, (*lavandería*) Tintorerís Ondo Garbí, which provides us with very good, usually one-day service, during our stay. Closed Sundays.

Getting to Hondarribia

The [San Sebastián airport](#) is located in Hondarribia with direct connections from Madrid and Barcelona only. The Biarritz-Anglet-Bayonne airport in the Pays Basque (France) is 25 minutes away by taxi, while the Calatrava designed Bilbao International Airport **sits** one hour 20 minutes away. There is regular bus service between San Sebastián and Hondarribia on the E21 (via the toll road) and E27 [Lurralde Bus](#). The buses depart from Gipuzkoa Plaza in San Sebastián-Donostia. Cost is 1,80€ one-way. Irún/Hendaye and San Sebastián are the nearest rail services for Hondarribia.

Ferry to and from Hendaye

One can take the little ferry, *navette maritime*, the [Bateau Marie-Louise](#), from the old pier/parking lot area in downtown Hondarribia to the port of neighboring [Hendaye, France](#), just across the Bidasoa estuary at Txingudi Bay, where you can walk to the expansive (3 km) sandy beaches of Ondarraitz, one of Hendaye's main attractions. The ferry runs daily starting at 10:00 am, and takes about 7 minutes to make the crossing. Tickets are 2€, one-way. Times may change depending on the weather. The slightly larger ferry, [Barco Hondarribia-Hendaye](#) departs from Paseo Butrón, a few steps away.



Wine Tasting In Hondarribia

Hiruzta

If your Basque itinerary doesn't include time for a visit to Getaria or Bakio in the Bizkaia province, you have the opportunity to visit a txakolí winery, this is the only winery in Hondarribia. The Rekalde family opened the winery in 2012 with 14 hectares and has filled the dream of reclaiming the century-old tradition of txakolí production in the Bidasoa. They have won many prestigious awards and produce two whites, a rosé, a red, 2 sparkling txakolís and a very special vintage white, *Parcela Number 3*. Visits are available on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays at 12:00 and 1:00 pm. They also have a new restaurant, the Asador Sutan with outdoor terrace now in the hands of Michelin-starred chef Gorka Txapartegi of Hondarribia's Alameda.



Dining in Hondarribia

Hondarribia has become known for its outstanding cuisine and is one of the special destinations for gourmands visiting the Basque country. The number of young chefs who have migrated here after studying under Pedro Subijana, Martín Berasategui and Arzak, among others, have given visitors a wide selection of great restaurants and pintxos bars to choose from, with the popular Bar Gran Sol having won numerous major pintxos competitions over the years.

La Hermandad de Pescadores*

Located at Calle Zuloaga, 12, not far from the old wharf, this “Fishermen’s Brotherhood” is a rustic, bustling, convivial place serving impeccable seafood, and one of the most popular destinations in the city since 1938. You’ll need to reserve ahead of time, particularly on weekends when the French arrive in droves via the ferry from Hendaye. In the front room you’ll dine at communal tables, or you can reserve a quieter, more private space in the second dining room beyond. Try the *almejas en salsa verde*, clams in green sauce, a house specialty, *rodaballo salvaje a la parrilla*, grilled wild turbot, the grilled monkfish, *rape a la plancha* or the *anchoas caseras en salazón*, homemade salted anchovies. The homemade desserts shine, such as the warm cheesecake and *patxineta*. And to accompany your meal

order a bottle of local Hiruzta txakolí, a Rías Baixas albariño or a fine Godello from Valdeorras. It's fun and informal (but not inexpensive). Closed Sunday evening and all day Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 642 738

Restaurante Alameda*

For gourmet dining and a Michelin star treat, choose this family-run destination located across from the road leading up to the Old Quarter and the Parador at Calle Mirasoroeta, 1. Considered by gastronomic critics as one of the finest spots in all the Basque Country for more than 20 years, the owners/chefs, Mikel, Gorka and Kepa Txapartegui, are among the country's top culinary stars. If you can dine in only one of Hondarribia's fine restaurants, splurge on the Alameda. Dine a la carte here or splurge on one of the two tasting menus, priced at 78€ or 115. Vegetables come from the chefs' father's own garden. The Repsol guide has bestowed Alameda with 2 suns, and it has been recommended by the New York Times. The restaurant opens for lunch from 1:00-3:30 pm and for dinner from 8:00-11:00 pm. Its more casual tavern opens for lunch from noon until 3:30 and from 7:30-11:00 pm. Closed Monday/Tuesday and Sunday night.

Tel: (+34) 943 642 789

Gastroteka Danontzat

For something more unusual, informal and imaginative, this small innovative space, tucked away in the Old Quarter at Denda Kalea 6, is a great spot to enjoy a small plates meal around a large communal table or on the outdoor terrace in the alley. The chef, Gorka Irisarri, offers pintxos, half *raciones* and full *raciones* so one can dine on as much or as little as your appetite requires. He's also an excellent cheesemonger, so don't forget to sample something from the cheese cart. The Gastroteka opens daily except for Tuesday from noon until midnight. Repsol guide recommended.

Tel: (+34) 943 646 597

Sebastián

For something in between Michelin starred and casual, choose this classic restaurant at Calle Mayor, 11, in the Old Quarter. It's on the way to the Parador, on your right past the town hall. Housed in a former tobacco shop, it has a cozy downstairs dining room with open beams and a fireplace with walls covered with paintings by local artists. The chef is Miguel Soto Darrosez, who offers a tasting menu for only 45€ + IVA. If you'd like to dine in a more casual atmosphere, then try their Zone 11 Bistro. It is open for dinner Tuesday-Sunday from 7:30 to 10:30 pm and serves brunch on Saturday and Sunday from 12:30 to 2:30 pm.

Tel: (+34) 943 640 167

Restaurante Arroka Berri

Serving traditional Basque cuisine with a creative twist, one of my Hondarribia favorites is Arroka Berri, in the upper residential zone on the right side of the road to the Cabo Higuer lighthouse at Calle Higer Bidea, 6. It's housed in a salmon colored, typical Basque farmhouse, remodeled in 2005 with two stylish dining rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs. Chef Gorka Cepeda, with Jesús Ancisar, specializes in fish and crustacean dishes: hake, cod, monkfish, Dover sole, turbot, porgy and sea bass. He also offers an excellent creamy rice with jumbo prawns. It's a favorite of local chef/TV personality, "Robin Food", David de Jorge. There's ample car parking across the street. Open Thursday-Sunday for lunch from 1:00 to 3:30 pm, and for dinner from 8:00 to 11:00 pm. Closed Monday-Wednesday. Reserve online or call.

Tel: (+34) 943 642 712

Abarka

This traditional Basque farmhouse/grill in the foothills of the residential district of *La Campiña*, at Baserritar Etobidea, 36, is where Chef Natxo García and his team offers classic Basque dishes with an innovative touch. His signature dish is rice with lobster, *arroz con bogavante*, to which he adds a cream of crab. To accompany your seafood crustacean dishes, be sure to try the local txakolí wine from the vineyards of [Hiruzta](#). Try the 4-course menu "*Tradicion*" for 27€, wine not included. Opens Tuesday-Saturday for lunch from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm and dinner from 8:00 pm to 10:30 pm and Sunday for lunch only from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm. Closed Mondays.

Tel: (+34) 943 641 991

Laia Asador-Sidrería (Erretegia-Sagardotegia)

Opened in 2006, this contemporary roasting house, at Arkolla Auzoa, 33, deep into the hills on the slopes of Mount Jaizkibel, is considered the temple of grilled meats (premium and dry aged) and fish. In 2015 the chef, Jon Ayala, won the award as the best grilling house from [Gastronómika San Sebastián](#). He and his crew also serve roast baby lamb, Segovia style. Reservations are highly recommended on weekends during the summer. Michelin and Repsol guide recommended. Open daily for lunch from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm and on for dinner from Wednesday-Saturday only from 8:30 pm to 10:00 pm. Closed Tuesday.

Tel: (+34) 943 646 309

Arraunlari Berri

Found directly on the Txingudi bay front promenade at Paseo de Butrón 3, this classically elegant restaurant of long standing is now in the hands of two talented young chefs, Aitor Amutxastegi (Gipuzkoan) and Jon Cous Azpetegia (Navarran), who manned the stoves of the

Relais & Chateaux Castell de la Ciutat in the Alt Urgell. Here they serve beloved, traditional but updated Basque dishes: rice dishes, *piperrada*, *txuleta*, *marmitako* (a Basque fish stew), *ttoro* (a Basque bouillabaisse) expertly grilled fish and *pastel vasco* (gâteau basque) and *goxua* for dessert. They offer a well priced, market driven lunch *menú del día*, Monday-Friday. Repsol guide recommended. Open for lunch but closed for dinner.

Tel: (+34) 943 578 519

[Txantxangorri](#)

Next door to Zeria at No.27, this popular small bar/restaurant occupies one of the most photographed buildings in Hondarribia. It's also a great stop for traditional pintxos.

Tel: (+34) 943 642 102



Pintxos Hopping In Hondarribia

Bar Gran Sol

The first on our list is located along the lively pedestrian Calle San Pedro at number 63, which is one short block behind the main street. This acclaimed bar, run by two young men, has won numerous gastronomic awards for its creative pintxos. Every dish is a little work of art and holds its own with the very best pintxos bars of San Sebastián. Go early because the pintxos disappear quickly and kitchen closes around 11:00 pm. If you arrive at 7:00, you'll find the bar covered with cold pintxos but you must wait until 7:30 to order the delectable hot pintxos from the kitchen. During the summer, the bar and terrace become mobbed very quickly. I suggest you grab a spot at one of the barrel tables on the outdoor terrace (no chairs-this is stand up dining) and send one member of your party inside to order and then to wait at the bar. The bartender will ask for your name and call you when your order from the kitchen is ready. No waiter service. It's survival of the fittest here, but you simply should not miss these highly inventive treats. Many local chefs (and some not local) love Gran Sol. It opens Tuesday-Saturday from 11:30 am-midnight (on Sunday until 12:30 am) but again, the kitchen prepares hot pintxos only from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm and again from 7:30 pm to 11:00 pm, on Sundays until 11:30 pm. Closed Monday.

Tel: (+34) 943 642 701

[Yola Berri](#)

The second bar, found at San Pedro, 22, serves as a local hangout with long wooden tables and benches, and a bar covered with traditional style pintxos from 11:00 am on. Hot pintxos are also available from the kitchen. There's also an upstairs dining room that serves huge portions at very moderate prices and is a favorite of the locals. It sits across the street from the Hotel Jauregui.

Tel: (+34) 943 645 611

[Vinoteka Ardoka](#)

Another excellent and stylish venue at Calle San Pedro, 30, is also the only *vinoteka*, wine store, in Hondarribia and offers, along with its selection of pintxos and small plates to share, outstanding wines. In 2017 they opened a second [Ardoka](#) in Madrid at Calle Bretón de los Herreros, 9. Closed on Tuesdays, except during the summer.

Tel: (+34) 943 643 169

[Bar-Restaurante Enbata](#)

The Hotel Jauregui has its own fine pintxos bar, which is very handy for late night dining, the kitchen doesn't close until 11:30 pm. This bar has been a finalist in the yearly Euskal Herria pintxos competition.

Tel: (+34) 943 641 054

[Gastroteka Danontzat](#)

"*Ni restaurante, Ni bar*", the city's newest, highly innovative, chef-owned gastrobar, receiving much critical acclaim, is located in the Old Quarter at Denda Kalea, 6. The chef, Gorka Irisarri, has won several recent pintxos competitions. Open from noon to midnight, closed Tuesday.

Tel: (+34) 943 646 597

[Bar Ondarribi](#)

This popular and recently renovated bar at Calle San Pedro 31, housed in a typical fisherman's home with a busy terrace during the summer, is one of the oldest pintxos bars in the Marina quarter. Come here for tapas or create a full meal from their list of *raciones*, which include the coveted white shrimp from Huelva, Cantabrian anchovies, clams and hake in green sauce, a soupy rice, a *txuleta* with red peppers and homemade *patxineta* for dessert. You'll find good value here along with excellent wines. It's a favorite of local chef and TV personality, David de Jorge ("Robin Food").

Tel: (+34) 943 829 243

Zabala

Also on busy Calle San Pedro at No. 8, you'll find this charming Sidrería/pintxos bar, with a second entrance on Calle Zuloaga. Come here for their daily fixed price menu available for both lunch and dinner: 3 courses with 4 choices for each course, wine or cider for 28€. Closed Monday. Popular with the locals.

Tel: (+34) 943 642 736

Other bars that we've enjoyed on pedestrianized Calle San Pedro include the classic (1940) [Bar Itxaropena](#) at No. 67, and [Bar Ignacio](#) at No. 20, which serves delectable potato omelets. Look for the green and white façade. You can sit at the bar or at a table. [Restaurante Itsaspe](#), at No. 40, offers an excellent a variety of traditional pintxos and small plates.

Nightlife in Hondarribia

Hondarribia offers little in terms of nightlife compared to San Sebastián, but one can have a nightcap at the Parador, or in the pretty garden of the popular bar and dance club, [Q Hondarribia](#), located on the road that leads to the city's beaches. Or head to [Bar Azkenportu](#), on the lower level in the picturesque blue building (see above) in the old quarter at San Pedro, 73, for a cocktail with the locals.



A Visit To Pasajes (Pasaia Donibane)

If you have the time on the drive between San Sebastián and Hondarribia, pay a visit to the picturesque fishing village of Pasajes de San Juan, also known as *Pasaia Donibane* in Basque. You can even reach it by a one-minute ferry ride on the [Itxas Zerbi](#) water taxi from Pasajes San Pedro, on the other side of the river, which separates the four districts of Pasaia (San Juan-Donibane, Antxo, San Pedro and Trintxerpe).

Or.... it's easier to reach from Hondarribia, taking the road (following the brown Jaizkibel signs) up to the top of Mount Jaizkibel to the Shrine of Guadalupe, with spectacular views and a lovely church, and continuing on this same road, the G1-3440 beyond Guadalupe, where you'll have even more expansive views of the coast at the second semi-ruined stone watchtower. After enjoying the dramatic views at the watchtower, continue down this road until it ends at Pasai Donibane. The village consists of one long street that actually passes beneath the first floors of a few of the villages houses, and it's typically Basque and atmospheric. Victor Hugo lived here for a while in 1843, in a house overlooking the water.

Things to see and do in Pasajes

Visit the [Iglesia San Juan Bautista](#), also known as *Parroquia de San Juan Bautista*, which dates from the 16th-century, with a facade of a mix of Neoclassical and Baroque architecture and where you will find two beautiful polychrome images of San Joaquín and Santa Ana.

Sign up for a traditional Basque cuisine workshop with Chef Alex Barcenilla of [Restaurant Ziaboga](#) who offers a 2-1/2 hour [cuisine workshop](#) for 99€/person, Monday to Saturday all year around.

Visit the [Mater Museum Ship](#), a classic Cantabrian tuna boat, a floating museum on artisanal fishing. Open March-December, Thursday and Friday from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm (Tuesday-Saturday in July and August), Saturdays from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 to 7:00 pm and on Sundays and holidays from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Tickets are 7€ for adults, 5€ for children.

[Albaola](#), the Sea Factory of the Basques, is located at the entrance of the Bay of Pasaia where you can watch the construction of the replica of one of its most famous Basque ships, the 16th-century whaling ship SAN JUAN. Access to the museum can be made by the sea thanks to a maritime transport service located at "[Muelle del Hospitalillo](#)". You can park for free at the Trintxerpe parking area at the wharf where you board the green boat for an exciting tour. Closed Mondays.

Plan on stopping by to see the [Victor Hugo House](#), a typical 17th-century 3-story house in the center of the village where Victor Hugo stayed in 1843. The museum was inaugurated in 1902, and includes the permanent exhibit, "Victor Hugo, traveling down the memory". Closed on Mondays. Entrance is free.

Take a boat ride around the Bay of Pasaia with the [Itxaszerbi Maritim Services](#) company which provides regular service starting Monday-Saturday at 6:30 am, 7:45 am on Sundays between Pasai San Pedro and Pasai Donibane. Tickets are 0,80€, no charge for children under 3 yo. The [Discovering Our Bay](#) tour is available for a maximum group of 10 for only 60€.



Lunch In Pasajes

Restaurante Txulotxo

This casual restaurant at Donibane Kalea (Calle San Juan), 71, with a terrace offering an excellent views of the port, is our personal recommendation. It also has a Bib Gourmand designation from Michelin and gets a nod from the Repsol guide. It offers *Txangurro al horno* (baked spider crab), and impeccably grilled fish. Try the menu of the day for 23€ + VAT, available Monday to Friday. Reservations required. Closed seasonally from the last two weeks of January through March 6.

Tel: (+34) 943 523 952

Casa Cámara 1884

This 17th-century mansion at the entrance to the port at Calle San Juan, 79, is also a charming place to eat while watching the boat traffic on the ría Oyarzun. At the center of the restaurant you'll find the fish tanks, where the 4th-generation of the Pablo Cámara family keep the lobster and spider crab (*txangurro*) pots under the floor and raise them up to the diners to make their selections. Lobster salad, hake cheeks (*kokotxas*), monkfish, sole meunière and seafood bisque are specialties. Meat lovers should choose the filet mignon with mushrooms and foie gras. Recommended in the Repsol and Academia Vasca de la

Gastronomía guides. It opens for lunch at 1:30 pm and for dinner at 8:30 pm. Closed Sunday evening and all day Monday. Closed seasonally from November 13-19.

Tel: (+34) 943 523 699

Ziaboga Bistrot

Stop in at Calle San Juan, 91, facing the Plaza de Santiago, for Alex Barcenilla's creative pintxos and to purchase gourmet products including Mendaro chocolates. Open from 11:00 am to 11:00 pm Mondays and Wednesday-Saturday, and from noon to 11:00 pm on Sundays.

Tel: (+34) 943 510 395

Bar-Restaurante Izkiña

This popular family restaurant, air-conditioned, serving traditional cuisine and elaborate pintxos, can be found across the river at Avenida Euskadi, 19, (Trintxerpe), a 5-minute drive from the center of San Sebastián-Donostia. Open Thursday-Sunday afternoons only.

Tel: (+34) 943 399 043 / 943 390 219

Restaurante Maritxu

Another bar-restaurant in the Trintxerpe district of Pasajes, popular with the locals, can be found a few steps away at Avenida Euskadi, 13. Closed Sunday evening, Tuesday, Easter and in September.

Tel: (+34) 943 399 062

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