Donostia / San Sebastián
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INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy, art, beaches, culture...
You can enjoy all this and more in San Sebastián (in Basque, Donostia), one of the most spectacular cities in Green Spain, which comprises the whole Cantabrian coastline.

If you’re a foodie, this is the place for you. Its numerous Michelin-starred eateries and the richness of its traditional cuisine make this one of the leading cities in Basque cuisine. But if there’s one thing San Sebastián is famous for, it must be its pintxos: delicious mini bites that encompass everything from traditional food to more sophisticated creations. You’ll want to try them all!

San Sebastián is also synonymous with culture. Its architectural heritage combines traditional and avant-garde styles. In each neighbourhood you will experience a different atmosphere and you can mix with the locals who are always willing to help.

Its white sandy beaches are the perfect place for sunbathing and long walks along the shore. As they are all different you can enjoy a distinct experience at each of them. Nature surrounds the city and you can enjoy its beauty from atop any of its mountains.

The famous San Sebastián International Film Festival, which takes place every September, is another reason to visit this city.

What are you waiting for? Discover one of the most beautiful destinations in northern Spain.
DISCOVER SAN SEBASTIÁN

NEIGHBOURHOOD BY NEIGHBOURHOOD

Discover the personality of each neighbourhood in San Sebastián, linked in part to the nature of its three magnificent beaches.

CENTRE – OLD TOWN: TRADITION, “PINTXOS” AND SHOPPING

The Concha Promenade borders the beach of the same name, which is one of the city’s symbols. Explore it on foot or by bike and lean on its beautiful railings as you enjoy the views of the bay.

After your walk, the old quarter awaits, offering you the chance to recharge your batteries. Walk through stone streets and practise the art of “txikiteo”, which involves moving from bar to bar drinking “txikitos” (small glasses of wine) and sampling delicious “pintxos” (a variation of tapas, usually skewered onto a piece of bread). Take a few minutes to visit the bustling Plaza de la Constitución, which is the setting for many local festivities, such as La Tamborrada Drum Festival.

Stroll through the romantic area, with buildings from the Belle Epoque movement and pedestrianised areas with trees. You can admire Buen Pastor Cathedral, Teatro Victoria Eugenia Theatre and the City Hall, which is a stunning building that played host to the city’s casino until gambling was prohibited in 1924.
GROS: A YOUNG, SURFING ATMOSPHERE

If you enjoy sports and nature, you’re in the right place. This cosmopolitan, dynamic and young district next to Zurriola Beach sees surfers pass by with their boards in front of its numerous terraces and small, charming shops. Make sure you try a surfing lesson!

Enjoy nature by heading up Mount Ullía, the most important hiking area in San Sebastián and which hosts a section of the Way of Saint James.

Fancy a little culture? Visit some art galleries, Kursaal Congress Centre and the Tabakalera (International Centre for Contemporary Culture).

ONDARRETA – IGELDO: SAN SEBASTIÁN WITH CHILDREN

Monte Igeldo Mountain and the gardens of Miramar Palace flank one of the most symbolic, family-friendly beaches in the city: Ondarreta. At the western end of the beach you will come across the Wind Comb, a famous sculpture by Eduardo Chillida. The fusion between the ferocity of the sea and the strength of the iron structures will render you speechless. You can also take in a spectacular sunset here.
At the other end of Ondarreta Beach are the Miramar Gardens, governed by the spectacular, English-style Miramar Palace from which you can view the Bay of San Sebastián in all its glory. Stroll along its gravel paths, surrounded by flowers, that descend to the sea.

To see one of the best views of the city, take the funicular railway to Mount Igeldo and, once there, spend a day out at the amusement park with the family.

The Antiguo neighbourhood that surrounds the beach has several pintxo bar and restaurant areas.

**AMARA – ANOETA: PEACE AND QUIET ON THE BANKS OF THE URUMEA RIVER**

Enjoy a relaxing walk or bike ride along the Paseo de Francia, on the banks of the Urumea River, which is dotted with charming, small palaces. Situated at the entrance to the city, this residential neighbourhood filled with hotels has excellent links with the centre.

On your walk you can visit Anoeta Stadium and the Real Sociedad Museum, both of which pertain to San Sebastián’s hundred-year-old football team.

**SANTA CLARA ISLAND**

In the centre of the Bay of La Concha you will find Santa Clara Island. It can be accessed by motorboat or, if you dare, by swimming. To the west of the island there is a bar with a terrace so you can enjoy the view.
History, science, sculptures... Culture awaits in San Sebastián's museums. These are some of our recommendations.

SAN TELMO MUSEUM
Admire the Renaissance cloisters of this magnificent 16th-century building nestled in the city's Old quarter. Inside, you will find collections related to ethnology, the Fine Arts and archaeology, with work by El Greco, Rubens, Fortuny, Sorolla and Zuloaga, amongst others.

NAVAL MUSEUM
Housed in an old port fish market, this museum will show you the history of Basques and the sea.

EUREKA! ZIENTZIA MUSEOA
Discover science's fun side with more than 169 experimental modules. In the Animalia room you can observe different animals in their ecosystems.

CASA DE LA HISTORIA
Take a look back at the history of San Sebastián in Mota Castle at the top of Monte Urgull Hill.

SAN SEBASTIÁN AQUARIUM MUSEUM
This is the second most visited museum in the Basque Country after the Guggenheim in Bilbao. Its facilities house banded coral shrimps, longhorn cowfish and two fabulous bull sharks.
If you will be visiting between January and April, make the most of the "txotx": cider establishments open their doors to offer seasonal cider accompanied by traditional menus.

However, one of the area’s most typical activities is going out for "pintxos". The capital of Gipuzkoa Province is paradise for fans of this informal style of gastronomy. You can get these culinary miniatures anywhere in the city, but especially in the Old Town. You’ll have more fun if you move from place to place, trying their traditional specialities as you go. There are also more sophisticated options available as reduced versions of haute cuisine. Colours to delight everyone.

Do you enjoy avant-garde dining? San Sebastián can offer you this experience with chefs like Andoni Luis Aduriz, Pedro Subijana, Juan Mari Arzak and Martín Berasategui. It is one of the world’s cities with the most Michelin Stars per square metre.

If you are a foodie, you will also find a large number of activities available to you. These range from cooking classes and ham cutting lessons to visits to wineries and markets.

One of the secrets to San Sebastian’s renowned gastronomy is its high quality prime ingredients. You can find a wide selection of seasonal products in its city markets, such as La Bretxa and San Martín. Some of the city’s most renowned chefs visit these markets daily to select the meat and fish they will serve in their restaurants.

Dining is a pleasure anywhere in San Sebastián.

San Sebastián’s activity calendar offers events all year round.

SUMMER

If you are visiting San Sebastián during the week of 15 August, you will hear the cannon shot that opens the Semana Grande Festival. The city prepares for a celebration, allowing you to enjoy great concerts, troupes, exhibitions and fireworks, amongst many other events. You can enjoy jazz’s biggest names during the second fortnight in July. San Sebastian International Jazz Festival livens up beaches, theatres, squares and auditoriums throughout the city.
AUTUMN

The red carpet of the city's most cosmopolitan event is rolled out in September: Zinemaldia San Sebastián International Film Festival, the stars of which stay at the historic Hotel María Cristina. If you book far enough in advance you can attend the galas and screenings.

You can also enjoy the Fashion Festival: Shopping Gauean. One night during the month of September, city centre stores open and organise sales of special collections in an event that combines fashion with the seventh art. The city's streets boast a big array of activities such as theatrical displays, concerts, photocalls...

WINTER

On 20 January, the city celebrates the day of its patron saint to the rhythm of drums. Feel the thrill at La Tamborrada Drum Festival while more than 125 companies bring life to the streets with song and dance.

At the beginning of the year, during the Teatro de Bolsillo Festival, you will find music, comedy, drama and magic in the town’s centre. If you would like to discover the latest innovations on the art scene, head to any of the shows hosted during the Dferia Performing Arts Festival.

SPRING

In May, San Sebastián's parks and the trees in its pedestrianised areas come into bloom. Amongst the vibrant colours you can dance to an Argentinian rhythm at the Tango Festival. At the end of the same month, the city hosts the cultural festival of Olatu Talka, in which citizens are the protagonists.
San Sebastián also offers you many opportunities to experience nature up close.

Sign up for a guided tour of Artikutza Nature Reserve, which is a forest haven that becomes a symphony of colours in autumn.

Mount Igeldo offers you one of the most spectacular views of the Bay of La Concha. You can go up in a funicular railway and visit the amusement park.

In addition to an excellent view, Urgull Hill affords you the opportunity to see the Casa de la Historia and the remains of the wall and canons that stand as witnesses to the city’s military past.

An old vantage point for viewing whales, Monte Ulía Hill is the city’s most important hiking area. You can go for a picnic and stop at the visitor centre.
PARKS AND GARDENS
Walk over María Cristina Bridge, which is the most elegant of those that cross the Urumea River, and wander the trails through Cristina Enea Park. Discover the exotic nature of its trees and the swans and peacocks that populate this oasis of serenity in the heart of the city.

The Hidden Gardens of Miraconcha go unnoticed between La Concha and the Paseo de Miraconcha, but we suggest you to take a seat on a bench and enjoy the views.

If you head up Urgull Hill, take walk through the Cementerio de los Ingleses Cemetery, which is one of the city’s most mysterious corners.

Opposite the City Hall are the Alderdi Eder Gardens. These are typical on postcards of San Sebastián with their flowers and tamarinds.

MONUMENTS
When walking through San Sebastián you will come across unique places. Admire the good taste of the architectural styles from the end of the 19th century by viewing Aiete Palace, in the neighbourhood of the same name. Visit its rooms where distinguished royal figures and members of the nobility once lived. You’ll love strolling through its gardens, designed with bridges, ponds and a large meadow that opens out towards the sea.

Another recommended spot is San Vicente Church, the oldest temple in the city, which is a fine example of the Basque Gothic style.

Head to the Comb of the Wind by Eduardo Chillida and the Construcción Vacía (Empty Construction) by Jorge Oteiza and discover two contemporary art sculptures that challenge the force of the sea.

VIEWPOINTS
One of the best places to see the city and its sunsets is from its hills. Head up to the panoramic terraces of Mount Igeldo to enjoy the most complete and renowned view of San Sebastián.

For an almost 360-degree view, head to the viewpoints on Urgull Hill: Mota Castle, Batería de las Damas and Baluarte del Mirador.
ENJOY
SAN SEBASTIÁN'S NIGHTLIFE

San Sebastián's nightlife is shared across three zones, each with its own character. You can go for drinks in the lively Old Town, which is the busiest district, with bars to suit all tastes.

Behind Buen Pastor Cathedral, the street Calle Reyes Católicos is the most chic area in the city, with modern establishments and edgier music venues. On this pedestrianised street you can enjoy a cocktail while sitting on one of its varied terraces.

If you are looking for a quieter setting, in the Gros district you will find bars and pubs where you can enjoy a relaxed chat and a drink.

WHAT CAN YOU VISIT
NEAR SAN SEBASTIÁN?

The Basque Country has so much to offer. Here are some ways you can get to know the Basque Country while you’re in San Sebastián.

BASQUE COAST

Travel the 60 kilometres of Gipuzkoa coastline and head to its wild cliffs that overlook the Cantabrian Sea. Visit its small fishing towns and take a dip at the beach, then sample their seafaring gastronomy. Or visit the Basque Coast Geopark, which covers the area between the Cantabrian Sea and the Basque Mountains, comprised of the municipal areas of Mutriku, Deba and Zumaia.
HONDARRIBIA-FUENTERRABÍA (GIPUZKOA)
Wander through its historic centre, which is a unique collection of palaces and stately homes that demonstrate its military past. Take a tour of the lively La Marina district.

BILBAO
Visit the Guggenheim Museum, which is the work of the Canadian architect Frank Gehry. Defined as the best building from the second half of the 20th century, it is the flagship of Bilbao’s conversion. Once in this town you can try a few "pintxos" in its old quarter.

VITORIA-GASTEIZ
Its historic quarter, which was declared a Monumental Site, has maintained its medieval roots. After wandering its streets, visit Santa María Cathedral, which inspired Ken Follet to write World Without End, the second part of The Pillars of the Earth. The capital of the Basque Country is also known for its green areas.

RIOJA ALAVESA
Visit some of its wineries nestled in cozy towns. Some of these are hundreds of years old while others boast more avant-garde architecture, having been designed by famed architects. You can enjoy a wine tasting session or purchase wine.

BALENCIAGA MUSEUM
Dedicated to the great fashion designer from Getaria, you can visit this museum in a new annex of Aldamar Palace on a hill at the highest point in his hometown.

SAGARDOETXEA CIDER MUSEUM
In Astigarraga you will be shown every ritual related to cider and provided with explanations about its preparation process.

CHILLIDA LEKU MUSEUM
Having booked in advance, when in the surroundings of Hernani you can contemplate 150 pieces by the San Sebastián native sculptor, Eduardo Chillida (1924-2002), which combine with nature in an old country house he owned.
HOW TO GET THERE

San Sebastián is a city that can be easily accessed as it is well-connected with the rest of the world via all forms of transport.

TRAIN
San Sebastián Railway Station connects the capital of Gipuzkoa Province with a large number of Spanish cities, including Madrid and Barcelona. It can also be accessed from international destinations like Paris and Lisbon.

PLANE
Within roughly 100 kilometres you will find three airports, two of which are international airports. San Sebastián Airport, which is 20 kilometres from the city of San Sebastián, offers connections with national and international cities. There is a bus that links San Sebastián with San Sebastián Airport in around 25 minutes. Bilbao Airport, 100 kilometres away, offers flights to various points in Europe, while Biarritz Airport, where French and international companies operate, is 40 kilometres away.

CAR
You can use the following roads to get here: the national A-1 road (Madrid-Irún), the AP-8 (Bilbao-Irún) and A-63 (Paris-Irún) motorways, and the AP-15 dual carriageway (Pamplona-San Sebastián).

GETTING AROUND SAN SEBASTIÁN

San Sebastián has several public transport options allowing you to get around easily.

BUS
The fleet of city buses owned by the company Dbus offers quick connections with any point in the city. You can check out the lines available on its website. There is also a tourist bus with fifteen stops, all of which are near must-see spots in the city.

COMMUTER TRAIN
You can use the commuter trains that leave Donostia Station to visit nearby places.

BIKE
With more than 30 kilometres of bike lanes, San Sebastián is the perfect city for cycling. There are various companies that offer bicycle rental.

BASQUE, CO-OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
Basque is the co-official language of the Basque Country, and Vitoria-Gasteiz, as the capital, is where it is most frequently spoken. Basque is said to be the oldest living language in Europe and its origins are still a mystery.

When visiting San Sebastián, you will see signs in both Spanish and Basque.