Spain: A Walking Tour of Basque Country

DAY 1 Depart from home / Fly overnight to Bilbao
Depart from home for Bilbao, Spain. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed in your flight itinerary.

DAY 2 Arrive in Bilbao / Transfer to San Sebastian
Upon arrival at the Bilbao airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. As you enter the arrival hall, look for your WolfTreks representative holding a VBT sign. Please wait here while your representative helps make arrangements for your transfer to your hotel in San Sebastian (a drive of approximately 90 minutes).

Take the rest of the day to explore the city and have dinner on your own. Your welcome dinner on the first day of the walking tour is at the hotel. You may want to consider dining in San Sebastian this evening.

Hotel: Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra

DAY 3 San Sebastian
Meet your Trip Leaders in the hotel lobby at 9 a.m.

Once we have gathered, we’ll have a short introductory meeting. Afterward, our warm-up walk is an easy stroll along the town’s two-mile-long beachfront promenade, which offers views of beautiful La Concha Bay. You will soon discover why Queen Isabella II and other wealthy aristocrats would spend their summer holidays in this scenic corner of Spain. To help get our bearings, we’ll ride the funicular to the Monte Igueldo viewpoint, which will give us a great perspective on this scenic seaside resort. We will continue with our exploration to the Old Town, which dates back to the 12th century. Here we enjoy lunch with an introduction to Spanish tapas—or pintxos, as they are known in the Basque language. In the afternoon, return to our seaside hotel for a siesta. Or join an optional afternoon walk to the summit of Monte Urgull, where we’ll visit Castillo de la Mota. The castle was built to defend the city from attackers and allowed for San Sebastian to prosper during the Middle Ages. You will find a museum within the castle with exhibits and information about the city’s history. This evening, get to know your fellow travelers and Trip Leaders during a welcome reception and dinner, hosted in our historic hotel overlooking the sea.

Hotel: Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra
Meals: B, L, D
Daily Options: Morning: 2.5 mile warm-up on flat, paved paths and cobbled streets; Afternoon: 2 miles on a paved path up gradual climb to hilltop

DAY 4 Train from San Sebastian to Tolosa / Walk through Basque villages / Farm visit

After breakfast, we’ll walk to the San Sebastian train station for our 30-minute train ride inland to the verdant hills of the Basque Country. Our destination is Tolosa, a town located on the Oria River. After a brief tour of Tolosa, we’ll have a short shuttle into the surrounding hills to the quaint Basque village of Bidania. Today’s walk immerses us in Basque country life as we meander through the neighboring villages on lesser-traveled, paved roads, where we’ll pass peaceful pastures nestled in the valleys. We’ll hear the tinkling sounds of cowbells and see sheep grazing as we walk under the shade of apple trees. A charming stone farmhouse will be our site for today’s lunch. Our host is Pello Urdapilleta, whose family has raised Euskal txerria—a breed of pig found only in the Basque region—for generations. Pello will introduce us to the rural culinary delights of this region of Spain.
Following lunch, you have the option to continue walking through the lovely countryside to our accommodations—a hotel within a restored, 17th-century jauregia (palace)—or you can travel there by van. Later, we’ll walk to the village to learn from the locals how to play the much-loved Basque game of pelota. This centuries-old sport has served as the basis for similar sports such as racquetball and tennis. However, the Basque people decided that rather than playing face-to-face over a net, they’d prefer to use their hands to hit a ball in a three-walled court—oftentimes using the exterior of the town church to play.

This evening, meet the jauregia’s owners and learn about the history of and future plans for this unique property. We will also have our Basque language class to prepare us for dinner on our own at our hotel, or perhaps for a walk into the village to sample the night life at the local pub.

Hotel: Iriarte Jauregia Hotel
Meals: B, L
Daily Options: Morning: 1.4 miles on rolling, paved country roads. Afternoon: 2 miles on rolling, paved country roads

**DAY 5 Basque Country hills and forests**
Today, our path will be a mostly steady incline through lovely forested hills and valleys. Stopping for lunch we’ll have the opportunity to feast on a Basque specialty: *alubias de Tolosa*, or Tolosa beans—purple-black legumes that turn red when cooked and are celebrated for their rich, buttery flavor. We’ll also have a chance to sample the local *sidra* (hard apple cider). After an included lunch, you have two options: You can shuttle back to our hotel, or you can return by foot retracing your morning path. Tonight, enjoy dinner at the jauregia. We will be treated to a delicious dinner prepared by the palace’s creative and renowned chef.

Hotel: Iriarte Jauregia Hotel
Meals: B, L, D
Daily Options: 4.3 miles on a flat and gradually ascending dirt path through forest, and paved country roads. Afternoon: 4.3 miles on paved country roads. Flat and gradually descending dirt paths through forest

**DAY 6 Walk the pilgrimage path “Way of St. James” / Hondarribia walking tour**
After breakfast, we head back to the coast. Our short transfer will take us to the start of today’s historic walk along the “Way of St. James.” The coastal route that we follow is considered to be the oldest of the paths leading to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, where many believe St. James is buried. Our path dates back more than 1,000 years and is believed to be the first institutionalized route used by religious pilgrims. The natural beauty of today’s walk—featuring vistas of the Bay of Biscay and small rugged coves—will be even more spectacular as we reach the summit of Mount Jaizkibel. We will then shuttle five minutes to the Sanctuary of Guadalupe, where a 15th-century Black Madonna is kept. From here, you can shuttle to our next hotel or continue your walk through the quaint fishing town of Hondarribia before ending at our hotel.

After free time for lunch on your own in Hondarribia, we will explore the town with a local guide, who will acquaint us with the history of our home for the next three nights. Hondarribia is a town with two identities: one belonging to the lower port town and the other to the 800-year-old medieval walled town above, with its balcony-lined cobblestone streets and magnificent vistas of the sea, the Bidasoa River and neighboring France.

This evening, we will have the special privilege of being guests at a members-only, private gastronomic society, or *txoko*, as it is known in Basque. Txoko members tend to be mostly men who have shared interests in cooking creative meals for their guests. When Basque culture was suppressed under the reign of Francisco Franco, txokos became safe havens where members could share their language and traditions as well as their
love of cooking. Women used to be banned from the society; today, however, they are welcome to dine with the men.

Hotel: Hotel Obispo  
Meals: B, D  
**Daily Options**: Morning: 5 miles on flat, dirt Way of St. James path along the Atlantic Coast. Afternoon: 1 mile walking tour on flat, paved and cobblestone streets

**DAY 7 French Basque country / Coastal walk to St. Jean-de-Luz**

Today, we have a short walk from our hotel to the pier, where we take a five-minute ferry ride across the Bidasoa River to Hendaye, France. This seaside resort with its long stretch of beach will be our starting point for today’s walk. Our narrow dirt path will meander past stunning cliffs, scenic coves and quaint villages before we arrive into St. Jean-de-Luz, considered to be one of the most attractive towns on the French Basque coast. You will have ample opportunities during the walk to shuttle to our destination if you would prefer more time exploring St. Jean-de-Luz.

There are many sites to visit in this idyllic town, such as the Maison Louis XIV, a temporary residence of the Sun King, who came here in 1660 for his marriage to Maria Theresa. You can also visit the nearby church where the pair was married, the largest Basque church in France. Or simply enjoy exploring the town’s picturesque harbor and pedestrian-friendly streets. Enjoy lunch on your own in one of the many outdoor cafes. Later in the afternoon, you may take the 12-minute train journey back to Hendaye. This evening, we will regroup and venture out to a nearby pintxos bar to compare stories of our adventures in France over delightful appetizers. Later, you can choose from among Hondarribia’s many gourmet restaurants for dinner on your own.

Hotel: Hotel Obispo  
Meals: B  
**Daily Options**: 2 to 7 miles on rolling dirt paths along coastal cliffs and coves with van support for shorter options

**DAY 8 Plaiaundi Ecological Park / Basque cooking demonstration & Fare well Dinner**

For today’s walk, you can choose from among several options, depending upon your interests. After breakfast, walk to Hondarribia’s marina and fishing port to see the many holiday boats and fishing trawlers. You may start a later morning walk from the hotel to the River Bidasoa marshlands and at times we’ll once again tread in the pilgrim’s footsteps on the “Way of St. James.” Later in the afternoon, you have the option to shuttle back to Hondarribia and explore the town’s art galleries, restaurants for lunch, and stores.

Tonight, we’ll learn how to replicate the flavors of Basque Country in our own kitchens during an exclusive cooking demonstration, followed by a farewell dinner in the hotel.

Hotel: Hotel Obispo  
Meals: B, D  
**Daily Options**: 2 to 6 miles on flat, paved walking paths, and urban streets

**DAY 9 Transfer to Bilbao / Guggenheim Bilbao Museum tour / Walking tour ends**

This morning, we transfer to Bilbao for a visit to the world-renowned Guggenheim Museum, designed by acclaimed architect Frank Gehry. We will have a 90-minute guided tour of the museum. This tour will include information about the building’s architecture and the current works on display. At the end of the tour, you will
be given a personal audio guide to further explore the museum’s exhibits at your leisure. After your visit to the museum, walk to the nearby Melia Bilbao hotel and check in for your overnight stay in Bilbao. The remainder of the day is free for you to explore this vibrant city at leisure. You will be provided with city information, which includes recommendations about what to see and do in Bilbao.

**Hotel:** Melia Bilbao  
**Meals:** B  
**Daily Options:** “Behind the Scenes” walking tour of the Guggenheim Museum

**DAY 10 Depart for home**
After breakfast, transfer to the Bilbao airport for your flight home.

**Please note:** For guests with early-morning departures, full breakfast at the hotel may not be available, but a light continental breakfast may be. Please check with the Front Desk to verify the times and locations where breakfast is served.

**Meals:** B