



Welcome to this homemade local guide of Bilbao where I try my best to introduce you to the main highlights of the city and its surroundings plus tips about transport, food, and much more!😊

INDEX

- 1. Getting to Bilbao**
- 2. What will we visit? Plan for the week & meal times in Spain**
- 3. How to get around**
- 4. Local gastronomy**
- 5. Practical Spanish to-go**

➔ 1. First, how can I get to Bilbao?

The easiest and fastest way is by plane. Bilbao has its own airport (code BIO), which is located around 13km from the city centre with many international flights on a daily basis to main European cities like Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris, Munich, Frankfurt, London and others. This makes it easy to fly there, usually with a layover in one of those cities. The most usual routes from northern Europe would be through Amsterdam/Paris with KLM or through Frankfurt/Munich with Lufthansa. The prices are not low-cost style but I find them fair given the distance and the fare.

The airport of Bilbao is connected with the city center by bus with direct shuttles very often, which is my transport recommendation. The bus number is A3247, a green line named Bizkaibus, as it is the regional bus and not the city one. The price is around 3€ (have it ready in cash just in case) and it takes around 30 minutes to Plaza Moyua, which is in the city centre close to a metro stop, so you can get anywhere else from there easily.

In case you prefer a taxi, these are always available and waiting for passengers at the airport. The price to the centre is around 20€ in cash or by card in most of the taxis and it takes around 15 minutes.

Other transport options if you are travelling from another place in Spain are, again, by plane with Vueling (Spanish low-cost airline) or AirEuropa (Spanish too) among others; by bus, the most known company is Alsa (<https://www.alsa.com/en/web/bus/home>) which is good; and by train with Renfe, that is the national railway company (<https://www.renfe.com/es/en>). All the options are affordable and with good services.

2. What will we visit? Plan for the week

As you all know, we have made a plan with daily excursions and activities for whoever wants and has the time to join. There is no expectation for everybody to attend everything, it is totally up to you and your time availability. There will be a WhatsApp group created for this purpose where everybody who is going to join will be added, and you just need to let us know when you are joining the travel group for what, especially regarding eating so that we can make reservations in the restaurants with the right amount of people.

Scan this QR-code to join the WhatsApp group.



UNDERSTANDING MEAL TIMES IN SPAIN

During the entire week we will follow the Spanish schedule, including meal times. This means that the morning activities will be around 10/11 am to 1/2pm, big lunch break from around 1/2 until 4/5pm or more, as we eat a 2 to 3 course meal here. Sometimes we have a nice siesta afterwards. The afternoon goes from around 4/5 to 9/10pm. Dinner usually takes place late evening, around 9 or 10pm, and it is a light meal consisting of one dish. For example a sandwich, small omelet, salad or something similar. The most important meal of the day in Spain is lunch, so you could say that we have inverted the importance and size of the meals compared to northern Europe where dinner is the main meal of the day.

The plan for the week will be:

Tuesday 16th: Wine tasting in La Rioja.

For this visit, we will drive to the southernmost part of Basque Country to visit the Rioja region, worldwide known for its fantastic wine, especially the red one. This will take a bit more than an hour by car so let us know if you need help renting a car to get there.

We will visit the well-known vineyard 'Bodegas de Marqués de Riscal'. We will book a guided tour in the morning in English so we need to know in advance who wants to join to make a group reservation. This will take a couple of hours including wine tasting. Afterwards we will eat lunch in a historical small charming town called La Guardia where we will also book a table to eat together. After lunch, we will sightsee a bit in La Guardia and maybe also a bit of the surrounding area if there is time before heading back to Bilbao for dinner.

Wednesday 17th: Road trip along the Bizkaia coastline

We will drive from Bilbao along the coastline stopping by a few highlights such as the church of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe (the place where the castle of Lannister in Game of Thrones was filmed), lunch in Bermeo and the natural park of Urdaibai. A day full of nature and traditional coastal basque towns. We will need to know who will join us for the day so that we can make a group reservation for the lunch.

Thursday 18th: Traditional Basque lunch and get to know Bilbao city

The morning will be free for you to decide what to do: Explore the city, go to the beach (easy my metro), or go shopping. If you want to go shopping, the mall of El Corte Inglés in Gran Vía is a good place. And another tip: Zara is usually cheaper in Spain than in all the other countries as the owner is Spanish and he decided to keep the prices a bit lower for his fellow citizens.

Around 1pm we will all take a bus (we will write the exact time and location of the bus stop in the WhatsApp group a few days before the trip) to a town that is on the outskirts of Bilbao for lunch in a 'sidrería' which is the traditional Basque restaurant. We need to know how many we will be for this meal in order to make a group reservation as well.

These types of restaurants are usually located in big old Basque stone houses in the countryside, and the menu consists of cod, chorizo, peppers and a biiiiig steak together with

lots of cider. Be ready to eat a lot a good food and have a lot of fun as pouring the cider in your glass is a task in itself! Come and see it for yourself ;)

After this, we will go back to Bilbao where we will spend the rest of the day chilling together either going for a walk, visiting something specific or whatever we feel like.

Friday 19th: Let's have fun together

Marta's sister, Laura Merino, is in charge of this day and she has planned out a day full of fun activities for everybody to join, so that we can get to know each other and the area too. The plan for the day is a surprise, so if you want to join, please let us know as we need to know approximately how many participants we will be. If you have further questions try writing Laura in either English or Spanish on WhatsApp: 0034665718528

Saturday 20th: LET'S GET MARRIED! VIVA LOS NOVIOS!

If you are convinced that you will NOT go back to Bilbao with the night bus at 11pm and want to continue partying in the local marina as long as our feet allow it (yay!), let us know please as we need to talk with one of the local bars and give notice of how large the group will be.

Sunday 21st: Day off for everybody to get over the hangover and for your feet and voices to recover 😊

Monday 22nd: Farewell lunch

If you are still in town and want to get together one last time, we will be eating lunch in a restaurant in Bilbao. Whoever wants to join, please let us know as we need to book a group reservation.

3. How to get around

The easiest and cheapest option to get around in Bilbao is by public transport: Metro, bus and tram. To get a transport card, go to a metro stop and take the stairs underground. There are ticket machines in every stop and here you can buy a Barik (that's what we call the transport card) which costs 5€. It is a plastic card that you can always keep and charge with money. Make sure you get an anonymous/non-personal card so there is no limitation as to who uses it or how many people you can beep in at a time. It is easy to load money onto the cards in the machines that are in every metro stop. Regarding prices, a trip in zone 1 (Bilbao centre) with the metro is around 0,80€, and the bus and tram are even cheaper. The Barik can be used for ALL public transportation in Bilbao, including the bus shuttle to the airport and the funicular (cable tram) to Artxanda, a viewpoint on a nearby mountain where you can get a nice panoramic view of the entire city.

There is no Uber in Bilbao but there are taxis of course. The phone number for the Bilbao taxis is: 0034 944 448 888.

4. Local gastronomy

Here is a list of the typical local and non-local dishes that we recommend:

- Pintxos: Small tapas on bread that come in many variations. They can be made of everything from meat, tuna salad, shrimp and many other things more. You can find them in every bar, go ahead and try as many as you can!
- Pintxo moruno: Spear of grilled meat and vegetables. The classic place to eat this is Café Iruña in the centre of Bilbao. Try them and let us know what you think.
- Bacalao al pil-pil: Cod in a sauce of olive oil. This is the most typical dish of Bilbao and the Bizkaia region.
- Croquetas: This is typical all over Spain. They are made of deep-fried dough of béchamel with either bacon, mushroom, cod, or many other options. You will find them in almost every bar, just like the pintxos.
- Tortilla de patatas: The classic Spanish potato omelet.
- Chorizo a la sidra: This is chorizo (in a sausage form) cooked in cider. Delicious.
- Txakoli: Typical Basque sparkling white wine
- Patxaran: Basque liquor made of berries that is a bit sweet.

5. Practical Spanish to-go

- Vineyard: Bodega
- Traditional basque restaurant: Sidrería
- Long live the newlyweds!: Viva los novios!
- Tram: Tranvía
- Cable tram: Funicular
- Txakoli: Typical basque sprinkle white wine
- Draft beer: Caña

Una caña por favor: A draft beer please

- Cerveza: Beer but it will most likely be understood as bottle beer so you have to point out which one you want.
- Light beer: Cerveza rubia
- Dark beer: Cerveza oscura
- Beer with lemon soda: Cerveza clara
- Can I get the menu, please?: Perdona, nos puedes traer el menú, por favor?
- The bill, please: La cuenta, por favor (when you want to pay in a restaurant/bar)

- A glass of red wine, please: Un crianza, por favor (Crianza is the 'normal' red wine to order). If they ask further which one you want, you can order the house red wine (tinto de la casa) or a Rioja for example, which is always good (un Rioja, por favor).

Red wine: Vino tinto.

White wine: Vino blanco

- Could you please tell me where the closest metro station is?: Perdona, sabes dónde está la parada de metro más cercana?
- Could you please tell me how to get to...?: Perdona, podrías indicarme cómo llegar a ...?
- Metro/bus/tram stop: Parada de metro/autobus/tranvía
- How much does it cost/What is the price?: Cuánto cuesta/Cuál es el precio?
- Thank you: Gracias
- You're welcome: De nada
- Good morning: Buenos días (this applies from breakfast until lunch, like half of the day. Remember the Spanish times from the meal times section)
- Good afternoon: Buenas tarde (from lunch to dinner)
- Good night: Buenas noches (when you are going to bed)
- See you later: Nos vemos luego/hasta luego
- See you tomorrow: Hasta mañana
- Bye: Agur (this is in basque as it is what we all say in Basque country) or "adiós" in Spanish.