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WEB RESOURCES AND TRAVEL PLANNING

MAPS
I urge you to buy the very detailed regional Michelin map #573, País Vasco, Rioja, Navarra. I guarantee you will find it to be a godsend, as it has the Basque as well as Spanish names for the places you will want to visit, available at Michelin, Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

Or you can purchase the Michelin maps at gas stations and bookstores throughout Spain. Also stop at any tourist office and pick up their handy road map of Euskadi, which is even more detailed than the Michelin map, as well as any other information that may be available. Their brochures are well done.

INFORMATION ON THE WEB
• www.gernika-lumo.net
• www.busturialdeaurdaibai.com
• www.lekeitio.com
• www.bizkaiacostavasca.com
• www.mybilbaobizkaia.com
• www.turismoa.euskadi.net
• www.xarmahotels.com

GUIDE BOOKS
• Hachette Vacancies The Basque Country (great cultural info)

TRAVEL PLANNING SERVICES
Exclusive Travel Planning Services by Iberian Traveler & Maribel's Guides. Contact Maribel to arrange a custom itinerary for your trip to Spain, Portugal, Paris or southwest France.

Travel planning services are fee based, depending on the length of your stay. The fee includes the preparation of a customized, day-to-day itinerary based on the client’s specific interests/travel style/budget, customized sightseeing, dining and shopping guides for each destination, booking of all accommodations, making restaurant reservations, securing of performing arts tickets (theater/opera/ballet/flamenco), setting up winery visits, cooking classes, personal guide services or special day tours, car rentals and consultation by email or phone.

USA Tel: (206) 861-9008 / (206) 364-6723
Email: info@iberiantraveler.com
Urdaibai, declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1984, is found on the north Atlantic coastline in the Basque province of Vizcaya (Bizkaia). Covering some 230 square kilometers, it includes 22 towns and villages and constitutes 10% of the surface area of Vizcaya.

It is both a stunningly beautiful and utterly tranquil jewel, an area of unspoiled natural beauty and the most important wetland zone in the Basque country. It looks out onto the Bay of Biscay and is sheltered by Cape Matxitxako, and is a place where verdant valleys reach down through an estuary to the sea, a land of dramatic cliffs, pine covered, low lying mountains, oak groves, lovely beaches, marshlands offering great birdwatching, a network of twenty footpaths for short walks and a countryside littered with traditional Basque farmhouses, known as caseríos, several of which have been converted into attractive, family run guest houses.

The Urdaibai has a mild, humid climate influenced by the proximity of the sea, a temperature range with only slight variations, rainfall distributed evenly through the year and few frosts. The best season to visit is May-September, to enjoy its lovely beaches, its world-class surfing, for the opportunity to explore the wetlands by kayak or canoe, to do some birdwatching along the estuary, or to participate in its many festivals.

At the heart of the region is the lively and prosperous market town of Gernika, symbol of Basque pride and identity. To the north is the former whaling port of Bermeo, still the most important fishing port on the northern coast, and the surfing center of Mundaka. Bilbao is a half hour’s drive to the west.
FESTIVALS IN THE URDAIBAI
CARNIVAL
Mundaka - dances of the atorras and the lamiak.
Markina - on the Sunday of Carnival, dancers, dantzariak, don bear costumes and perform the zahagi-dantza, whose mission is to ward off ghosts and frighten the children. This is followed by the “goose run” (see Lekeitio below) - here seven or eight young men of the village grab at six dead geese hanging from a rope, pulling them by the neck in an attempt to decapitate them while galloping back and forth on horseback without stopping.

FIESTA DE SAN JOSÉ (St. Joseph’s Day) - March 19
Presentation of the txakoli harvest in Bakio

SUMMER SOLSTICE - June 23
Summer solstice-eve of San Juan (St. John the Baptist)-bonfires and dances of the witches in Bermeo and Lekeitio

FIESTA DE SAN JUAN - June 24
Pilgrimage to the shrine of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe.

FIESTA DE SAN PEDRO - June 29
“Kaixaranka” dances in Lekeitio. A dancer dressed in a top hat and tail coat with the keys of St. Peter in hand, dances atop a kutxa or chest, carried on the shoulders of eight fishermen.

FIESTA DE LA MAGDALENA - July 22
According to tradition, following a dispute over who owned the island of Izaro, Bermeo and Mundaka decided to settle the disagreement with a regatta and with the citizens of Elantxobe as referees. Bermeo was declared the winner, and since then, every year the Bermeo city council verifies its jurisdiction over the island with a sea procession to it.

The day starts when a hundred or so citizens of Bermeo, along with the mayor, all attired in navy blue and wearing traditional blue and white checked kerchiefs. embark on a boat trip to Izaro. The day begins at 10:45 am when the city hall delegation proceeds to the church of Santa Eufemia for mass. After the religious ceremony, the group marches to the port for their voyage.
on the Ortube fishing boat to the island. When reaching the island, the group will climb to its top and place the Bermeo and Basque flags there to symbolize the “retaking” of Izaro. Back on the boat, the mayor will throw a tile out to sea. Where the tile falls will symbolize the limits of Bermeo’s sovereignty.

Afterwards, they will continue to the neighboring fishing village of Elantxobe, where the group will disembark at the port to be greeted by the Elantxobe mayor, who will hand over to the Bermeo delegation the ceremonial staff, and sign of authority over island of Izaro. From here they proceed to the port of Mundaka, where they will do the same. Around 7:30 pm, the delegation returns by boat to Bermeo where the populace greets them, and they all march back to city hall. This tradition dates back to 1641.

**ANTZAR EGUNA - September 1-8**
San Antolines and the Goose Day, Lekeitio. The San Antolin festival, held every year between the 1st and 8th September, reaches its peak on September 5th (or 6th) with the "Antzar Eguna", the day of the geese, one of the most popular (and bizarre) festivals in the province. The Antzar Eguna is an age-old fiesta, dating back more than 350 years, once celebrated the length and breadth of the country.

Either Saturday or Sunday marks the day on which eager festival-goers "run the goose". This truly wacky game consists of decapitating a dead goose hanging from a rope in the middle of the harbour – the participants doing so by using nothing but their body weight and the strength of their arms while being hoisted in and out of the water.

Each participant comes alongside the goose hanging from a rope and grabs the neck of the dead animal, then jumps into the water. Meanwhile, a group of "sailors" - kids from the town - pull on the end of the rope, sending both goose and contestant flying into the air. The “sailors” then release the rope, plunging the contestant and his goose back into the water. The idea is to try to separate the goose's body from its head while withstanding this constant jostling.

If you decide to venture to Lekeitio to get a first hand look at this crazy event, remember that last year, 70,000 people came out to do so as well!

The "Antzar Eguna" has been a part of the San Antolin festival since 1877. Prior to 1722, the “goose run" was performed in the village square, but since then the event has taken place in the water. And prior to 1986, the geese were hung alive (vimeo.com/28836864).

**MARIJESES DE GERNIKA - December 16-24**
This tradition involves a large group of Gernika citizens (los marijeses) who depart from the church of Santa Maria each morning at 4:00 am from the 16th to the 24th and walk the streets of the town for two hours serenading the townsfolk with traditional Basque songs having to do with the Virgin and the Nativity. On Christmas Eve they are joined by former components of the group and family members and their songs go on until 2:00 pm. with lovely views of the park.

Call for reservations: 94 400 06 66. Open for lunch from 1-4 pm and for dinner from 9-11 pm. (www.mendibile.com)
GERNIKA-LUMO
Your first stop along the way should be in this historic city northeast of Bilbao, the ancient seat of Basque democracy and symbol of Basque nationhood. Because of its symbolism and fiercely Republican stance during the war, Generalísimo Francisco Franco targeted it for horrid punishment, becoming the site of the infamous saturation bombing, “a dry run” to practice the Luftwaffe’s theories of terror bombing in preparation for the saturation bombing prevalent during WWII. This historic tragedy began at 4:30 in the afternoon of April 26, 1937, market day, when the villagers and nearby neighbors gathered at the weekly market. A squadron of Hitler’s Luftwaffe Condor Legion and the Italian Fascist Aviazione Legionaria, fifty-nine German and Italian planes began their bombardment of the town, which lasted for three hours. The Basque government estimated that 1,645 people died in the air raid (later research has reduced that number), and almost every building in the town was destroyed. Picasso’s painting *Guernica*, displayed in the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, immortalizes this massacre.

PRINCIPAL SIGHTS
“TREE OF GERNIKA”
Symbol of Basque democracy, *Gernikako Arbola*, the tree survived the bombing and can be found next to the old Basque parliament building, *Casa de Juntas*. The original oak tree, the “father”, was planted in the 14th century and lasted 450 years. The third tree survived the bombing in 1937 but was replaced, because of fungus, with the current one in 1986. The trunk of the original oak, under which the lords of Biscay would promise to uphold ancient Basque privileges, *fueros*, is protected in a pavilion while the seedling spreads its branches.

CASA DE JUNTAS
The Assembly House, built in the early 1800s, was designed in neo classical style by architect Alfonso Echevarría, and now serves as the home of the Vizcayan parliament. It is at this site where the Basque parliament met for centuries beneath the branches of a sacred oak tree to make decisions on matters pertaining to Vizcaya. The tradition was broken when the Basque system of law was abolished after the last Carlist War in 1879, but revived in 1979 with the democracy. Inside the chamber you’ll find a magnificent stained-glass ceiling that depicts the ancient oak tree.

It is open daily to visitors from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm during the summer, closes at 6:00 pm in the winter. Admission is free, but you’ll need an appointment to visit.
Tel: (+34) 946 251 138

PARQUE DE LOS PUEBLOS DE EUROPA
Behind the Casa de Juntas sits a public park in which are displayed Henry Moore’s “*Large Figure in a Shelter*” and his contemporary, the Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida’s “*Gure Altaren Etxea - Our Father’s House*”, that express the symbolism of Gernika as a city of peace. The park is open from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm daily, until 9:00 pm during the summer.
BASQUE PEACE MUSEUM
There is also a very moving and award winning museum in the Plaza de los Fueros, Gernika’s showpiece, which I highly recommend. Your visit there will leave you with a lasting memory of this tragic event and a greater appreciation of the Basque struggle for freedom to practice their language and culture. I would always include a visit to the Peace Museum in any trip to Gernika. I was so impressed that I bought the video (in English) and shared it with my Modern European History professor friends (www.museodelapaz.org).

The museum is open March-September, Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm without interruption, and on Sundays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. October-February it’s open Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and again in the afternoons from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. Closed Monday. General admission is free. Guided visits (28€) are available for groups of 8 or more.

MUSEUM OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY (EUSKAL HERRIA MUSEOA)
This museum of Basque history and culture is found in the Alegría Palace, a magnificent Baroque edifice built in 1733, which miraculously remained standing, fully intact, during the bombing of 1937. It sits next to the Parque de los Pueblos de Europa and near the Casa de Juntas and the Tree of Gernika. The museum serves to promote the understanding of the historical, political and cultural importance of the Basque people and displays on four floors, with elevator, a sizable collection of artifacts relating to the Basque history and ethnography (bizkaikoabiizkaia.eus/).

The building is handicapped accessible. General admission is 3€. Free audioguides are available in several languages. Closed Mondays except public holidays and the last Monday in October.
Tel: (+34) 946 255 451
MARKET DAY
Gernika remains a heavily industrialized town, considered a punishment by Franco after the civil war, and not much remains of its former glory, but it’s worth a visit nonetheless, particularly on Monday, the traditional market day. Because of the crowds, you must arrive early, between 9:00 and 9:30 am, to find a space to park. Spaces fill up quickly. Local farmers gather and set up their stands surrounding the indoor market in the heart of the city.

Here you can purchase the fabled red beans of Gernika, alubias, or the equally prized green peppers, along with locally produced txakoli and the Idiazábal artisan ewe’s milk cheese. On the first Monday of October a cattle fair takes place, and on the last Monday of October, there is a special agricultural products fair.
DINING IN GERNIKA

ZALLO BERRI
While visiting Gernika, reserve a table for a great lunch at Zallo Berri, Juan Kaltzada, 79, just beyond the Red Cross building on the road leading out of town. Our friend and Basque chef Joseba Jiménez de Jiménez, first recommended this great restaurant to us several years ago. Gorka Ordorika, the skilled sommelier, offers a very well chosen wine list with a good number of quite reasonably priced local txakolís, while chef Iñigo Ordorika is making gastronomic waves with his impressive creations of highly innovative, market-driven cuisine. He was one of the four prominent Basque chefs invited to visit Boise, Idaho to conduct a special cooking class at the university. Recommended in the Michelin Guide and Guide Repsol. Try their excellent 26€ lunch menu (www.zallobarri.com).

Opens for lunch at 12:45 and for dinner at 8:00. Closed Sunday night and Thursday.
Tel: (+34) 946 251 800

ZIMELA
At Carlos Gangoiti, 57, at the northern edge of town on the road to Bermeo, this spot, with an energetic chef, is housed in a three-story, Basque farmhouse-like building painted a bright mustard color with dark green trim. Inside you’ll find contemporary décor, done in white, red, grey and black and very well spaced tables. The name of the game here is grilled red meats and fish. For those folks watching their wallets, Zimela offers a solid value weekday menú del día, two courses for only 17€ and a weekend menu for 26€ (www.zimela.com)

The restaurant is open year around for lunch, and for dinner on Friday and Saturday. Dinner is served daily in July, August and December.
Tel: (+34) 946 251 012

BASERRI MAITEA
For a treat in a beautifully decorated, atmospheric stone and wood 18th century Basque farmhouse, head a few kilometers up the road to Forúa, the well-to-do suburb of Gernika, to the restaurant Baserri Maitea. Follow the signs up the hill through an upscale housing development. The road may seem more like a farm road, but a great meal awaits you at its end. Former professional soccer star, Juan Antonio Zaldúa is the owner (www.restaurantebaserrimaitea.es).

I love to have lunch in this atmospheric inn, decorated in a sophisticated yet rustic style, with its beautifully set tables, charming farmhouse décor, lovely, relaxed ambiance and perfectly executed dishes, as it always makes for a memorable experience. Every dish is delicious here and made of the highest quality ingredients found at the market-filet mignon topped with an Idiazábal cheese sauce, perfectly grilled chuletón, or a grilled monkfish or porgy. And the delectable desserts are all made to order. This lovely inn receives one Repsol sun. We had one of our most memorable lunches here. Very creative food beautifully presented and a gem of a find.

Open daily for lunch and dinner.
Tel: (+34) 946 253 408
STAYING IN THE URDAIBAI

Because of its UNESCO protected Biosphere status, Urdaibai is not and can never be endowed with large, multi-story hotels or resorts. Most accommodations are of the small inn, reconverted traditional Basque farmhouse variety. Some do provide 3-4 star hotel comforts but at a pleasantly lower rate, such as the ecological farmhouse inn with serene sea views, Lurdeia, above Bermeo, the surprisingly avant-garde Aldori or the beautiful reconverted Basque farmhouse Urune, both in Muxika, below Gernika. For honeymooners or those celebrating a special anniversary, there is even a romantic restored Neo-Gothic castle with a stunning three-floor tower suite, the Castillo Arteaga, just north of Gernika.

Those who want a lively, colorful and authentically Basque fishing village atmosphere with plentiful pintxos bars and restaurants and wish to walk to the harbor and beach, should consider a night in Lekeitio at one of my two recommended hotels.

Those on a strict budget can choose among several Nekatur Association rural guesthouses, or casas rurales—what English speakers know as a country B&B. A casa rural in the Basque language is a landa etxea. These rural homes, all government inspected, offer from 2-6 rooms with private baths at gentle tariffs of €50-95 per night, including breakfast. See the selection at www.nekatur.net and choose Urdaibai, Uribe or Lea-Artibai from the Search by Region option.

For families with children, some of the Landatxea options offer apartments, such as the Urresti in Gautegiz-Arteaga. And for those who require Internet access, some do provide free Wi-Fi. Most provide laundry service and all serve delicious breakfasts.
MY RECOMMENDED URDAIBAI ACCOMMODATIONS
SOUTH OF GERNIKA
HOTEL URUNE
This is a newer upscale property located off the BI-635, the main highway running north-south through the Urdaibai from Amorebieta up to Bermeo, in the municipality of Muxika, neighborhood-auzoa- of Txakale. It has only eight rooms (seven doubles and one triple), housed in a typical late 18th century Basque farmhouse, or caserío. There are handicapped facilities, as one of the guest quarters is on the ground floor. The attractive bedrooms offer complimentary Wi Fi, satellite TV, phone and private baths. Dinner, consisting of cold tapas, cheese and charcuterie, can be taken here upon request. In the downstairs area guests will find a living room with fireplace, dining room and library at their disposal plus a large outdoor terrace with seating and a barbecue, along with pretty mountain views (www.urunehotela.com).

The inn is a member of the Ruralka group of small and charming country inns. I often stay in Ruralka inns all over Spain; they are similar to but generally slightly less expensive than those inns belonging to the Rusticae group. Rates: doubles run from 90€ in low season. Buffet breakfast costs an additional 9,50€, continental is 3,25€.

Because the Urdaibai is a protected zone, no hotel signs can be placed on the highway, so one needs to follow the directions on the web page to reach the inn.

Tel: (+34) 944 651 663 / 639 646 722

ALDORI LANDETXEA

This dramatically reconverted Basque farmhouse-turned country inn, a very attractive two story, white stucco and stone building with dark wood shutters. It lies one kilometer from the Bilbao-Gernika highway and the Bizkaia bus stop. It’s a member of both Rusticae and Nekatur, the
Basque rural farmhouse-inns organization. The property is both ultra contemporary and immaculate.

Like the Urune, it offers spacious rooms with striking contemporary decor, somewhat more “bold” or “avant-garde”. There are only six rooms, some decorated with a Pop Art esthetic, and all are outfitted with complimentary Wi-Fi, jazzy baths (some with Jacuzzi showers) and satellite TV. One is a suite, one ground floor room is handicapped adapted and two have private terraces. The inn also offers an outdoor terrace, a chill-out lounge, a fireplace and dinner service upon request (www.aldori.es).

Guests will find a surprise upon entering the reception/café area, a tapestry of JFK and the White House in the background, a tribute of the owners’ father, Pertika, who was a member of the US Merchant Marine. Guests will also find giant reproduction ship manifests decorating the upstairs halls from the passenger ship Magallanes that plied the New York-Havana-La Coruña-Santander-Bilbao route in the 1940s. In 1947 the proprietors’ Aunt María Rosa took passage on the Magallanes.

Doubles begin at 80€ and suites are 160€ in low season. Buffet breakfast is 8€, dinner is 18€. The owners speak English.
Tel: (+34) 946 271 509 / 671 671 089
NORTH OF GERNIKA
On the west side of the Estuary

ATXURRA HOTEL-APARTMENT
A 3-star rural hotel with apartments, this lodging choice lies above the port of Bermeo on Mount Sollube and is more “remote” because it sits further from the main Bermeo-Gernika road, but this location allows it more spectacular views, thanks to its perch on the hillside. It’s a member of Xarma, a group of charming Basque Country boutique hotels.

It’s a brightly colored stone, stucco and wood farmhouse offering 11 doubles, 1 single and four apartments. Each apartment has a kitchen, living room, dining table and two bedrooms, each with private bath, all measuring 75 square meters.

Guest quarters also come with flat screen TV, in room safe, radiant tile floors and complimentary Wi-Fi. All rooms enjoy lovely views. Along with the Aldori, Ontxene and Lurdeia, it receives fine reviews from Top Rural (www.toprural.com). Because it’s a rural hotel, it offers a public lounge, Café-Bar, 24-hour reception, free parking and has an elevator (www.hotelatxurra.com).

Rates for the apartment that sleeps four is €158 + 10% VAT in low season, double rooms are €85. Breakfast is included. High season is July, August and Holy Week. Closed from December 15 through February.

Tel: (+34) 946 271 509 / 671 671 089

LURDEIA

This heavenly spot, sitting fairly close to the Atxurra, on the slopes of Mount Sollube, above Bermeo, which allows it utterly serene and spectacular sea views. The entire property was built from the ground up by a group of six industrious male friends, who are devoted ecological
farmers. They built the beautiful stone farmhouse with its geranium bedecked balconies with their own hands and have completed their corporate retreat center. They call this “a magical meeting place, an arc of peace and silence”.

On a scouting visit after the property first opened, I was welcomed with open arms by the kind proprietors, and they graciously offered me an afternoon of conversation, along with a platter of Iberian ham, fresh farm tomatoes, local sheep’s cheese and their own organic txakolí, just as a thank you for dropping by to see their new inn.

The property has a huge vegetable garden (vegetables and lettuce free of charge for the guests), a small lake stocked with trout, its own chickens (who live a long and luxurious life), a sculpture by the famed artist Néstor Basterretxea and even a dolmen (www.lurdeia.com).

The house has eight guest quarters, two located on the ground floor, all outfitted with very good beds (firm latex mattresses), simple country furniture, sparkling baths, plasma TV and free Wi-Fi. The inn doesn’t accept children under 12 to assure the peace and tranquility of their guests.

Breakfast is taken (to the sounds of opera) in the living room-dining room with picture windows looking out to the sea. Fresh eggs from the property’s hens and vegetables from the garden are offered both at breakfast and for guests to prepare their own dinners in the communal Txoko.

A washer and dryer are also available to guests. While the hosts don’t speak much English, they are learning and are extremely warm and welcoming. They have had many English speaking guests who have posted enthusiastic reviews on both Trip Advisor and Top Rural.

The access to the house from Bermeo is well signposted but up a curving mountain road. Once at the top, you’ve reached paradise. Like the Ontxene, below, and Aldori, it’s a member of Nekatur. Bilbao is about a half hour drive from the house. The Euskotren also runs to Bilbao regularly from Bermeo.

Rates for the double rooms are 65€ and 85€ plus 10% VAT, and 70€ and 90€ during high-season and on the ‘Special Days’ in 2016. Breakfast is 6€/person.

Tel: (+34) 946 477 001 / 666 477 665

ONTXENE

Or try the beautiful Casa Rural Ontxene in San Kristóbal (Busturia), located just off the BI-2235 between the fishing village of Bermeo and the historical city of Gernika. This home has been my “budget” Urdaibai base for several years, because of the truly magical setting, the warmth of the
owner, Irune, the handy location off the highway between Gernika-Lumo and Bermeo, and because it is just a fine value.

It is a smaller property than those listed above, an immaculate private home on three floors (Iruna and her husband live in the basement portion), painted a bright salmon with green trim. It has sweeping views of the estuary and Llaida beach and is only a 20-minute drive from the Bilbao airport.

Ontxene means “owl” is Basque, and Irune has quite a collection of decorative owls displayed around the home, including two stone owls flanking the entrance gate (casaruralontxene.com).

Iruna prepares a delicious breakfast served in the small breakfast room lying off the downstairs living room. There is another living room upstairs reserved for guests only, with a library of books and DVDs.

What I most enjoy in the house is its huge, ground floor outdoor terrace looking directly onto the estuary and with views of the sea beyond. Since there is only one bedroom downstairs and the upstairs quarters have their own views, this terrace, outfitted with tables and chairs, I have to my own. It’s a peaceful spot to come home to after a day of sightseeing, to check my email, write in my journal, have a glass of wine and soak in the sunsets.

The house has six rooms, three suites, two double rooms and one double room on the main floor, all of which have TV/DVDs, minibars, and hair dryers. There is free WiFi throughout the house. This is one of our favorite homes in the País Vasco, and is available as a whole house rental for up to 12 people. Rates run from 70€ to 118€ in high season, with breakfast and tax included.

Tel: (+34) 946 870 389 / 605 708 888
ON THE COAST ABOVE GERNIKA

On the east side of the estuary with spectacular views

GAMETXO HOTEL & SPA
Small and rather isolated, but with truly unforgettable, eye popping views of the sea, Mundaka, Bermeo and the lighthouse at Matxitxako and Ogoño Capes. It’s a cute and very gently priced guesthouse with 18 rather compact guest quarters in the renovated Basque farmhouse inn, an adjacent renovated farmhouse housing seven family apartments, and truly extraordinary sea views. But not all the rooms face the sea, so one must request a special, superior room, such as 209, or 301 on the top floor, which has a canopied bed. The guest quarters come equipped with TV and Internet access (with a cable) and baths have either Jacuzzi tubs or showers (hair dryers upon request). The 3-4 person apartments have a double bedroom, separate living room with TV, Internet access, free Wi-Fi and phone, bath and fully equipped kitchen with washing machine, microwave, fridge and utensils.

Although the Gametxo does offer a haven of peace and tranquility, one cannot walk to the ocean, and there is no dining in the immediate vicinity. So one needs to go by car to Llaida beach and to dine in Gernika, a distinct disadvantage. Also, there are mosquitos, so come prepared with plenty of repellant. Although the ocean views are truly astonishing, either from one’s room terrace or from a lounge chair on the lawn, the hotel offerings here are minimal. Breakfast is served downstairs, for an additional €7 and that’s it.

They offer no meals other than their buffet breakfast, but they will recommend and make reservations for area restaurants. It’s very near the two main Urdaibai beaches of Llaida and Laga. The host speaks English. An amazing value! (www.hotelgametxo.com).

Tel: (+34) 946 277 710
FOR LOW BUDGET TRAVELERS

On the east side of the estuary

CASA TXOPEBENTA

Near Gernika, on the road heading out towards the coast, the BI-2237, in the small hamlet of Gauteguiz-Arteaga, you’ll find one of the very finest examples of the Basque Country’s Agroturismos. Opened in 1988, the Casa Txopebenta is a beautiful stone and timber farmhouse, complete with wood beamed ceilings, a charming sitting room with a corner fireplace for its guests, and six small, but cozy, antique filled rooms, all with private baths. The couple who owns this agroturismo, Txope and Arrantxa, were the pioneers of this agroturismo movement in the Basque Country when they decided to create a guesthouse within their own 19th century farmhouse and did so by adding another floor, using old railway ties as lintels, stairs, benches and roof supports.

Downstairs there is a charmingly decorated sitting room with fireplace where the truly delicious homemade breakfasts are served (in the summer they are served on the outdoor covered porch). The guest quarters are found on the first and second floors and the best rooms are the attic rooms No. 4 and 5, with their stone walls and wood beamed ceilings, decorated with antiques. But the baths have showers only and are tiny. Also because of the construction of the house, noise does reverberate, so it’s best to choose the rooms on the top floor.

The entire house is immaculately maintained and decorated with taste, featuring lovely hand embroidered linen curtains and pillow shams. The property does have Internet access. The proprietors are extremely gracious, warm, caring and thoughtful hosts who send their guests off on each day’s excursions armed with maps, sightseeing and dining recommendations. And their son Antonio speaks English. On each of our visits Arantxa has bid us farewell with a parting gift, a bottle of txakolí or a carafe of homemade patxarán.

It’s located only 4 kms from the beautiful Laida and Laga beaches on the coast, in the heart of the Urdaibai Nature Reserve with the famous painted forest of Oma, by artist Ibarrola, and the Santimamiñe (Paleolithic) caves. Listed in the Michelin red guide, it’s on every critic’s list of Spain's best casas rurales and a favorite of cookbook author Teresa Barrenechea, author of “The Basque Table”.

The house has been featured in Pays Basque magazine and in a German interior design coffee table book, which your hostess Arantza will be happy to show you. This is a very popular destination for people traveling through the area (casaruraltxopebenta.com).

Tel: (+34) 946 254 923
FOR BUDGET TRAVELERS
And families with small children, on the east side of the estuary

URRESTI
In the Barrio (auzoa) Basetxetas of Gautegiz-Arteaga, this member of Nekatur provides friendly, tidy and pleasant accommodations both for those traveling on a budget and for families with small children, as it offers two apartments along with its six double rooms. The house sits on the east side of the Gernika estuary, in the countryside, in a quiet valley below the BI-2237 road that leads to Elantxobe. In the adjacent field, the owners keep farm animals; rabbits, hens, sheep, emus, and they also have a resident dog and cat (which are not allowed inside the inn).

The six double rooms, all individually decorated, come with hand carved pine furniture, canopy beds, free Wi-Fi and sparkling baths.

The two apartments are duplexes and have independent entrances. This would be ideal for a family with two small children. Each apartment consists of a large downstairs living/dining/kitchen area and a powder room. The sitting area is equipped with a 1.40-meter sofa bed, and the kitchen area has a kitchenette (but not equipped for preparing full meals). Upstairs guests find a double bed (1.50 meters) and full bath with hair dryer and Jacuzzi shower.

The house also has a full kitchen downstairs that guests lodged in the double rooms can use (for a charge of €6/person/day), a sitting/breakfast room with fireplace, where the delicious homemade breakfasts are served, a computer and a small library. For groceries, one needs to drive into Gernika to the large Erroski supermarket.

Outside there is a garden and a barbecue. Other services include laundry (for €6/load), bikes to lend, along with cribs for babies.

The owners, María Luisa and Juan Mari, receive many compliments on their hospitality on Trip Advisor and Top Rural (www.urresti.net)

July and August are very busy in the Basque country as Europeans tend to plan their vacations far in advance, so you should plan on reserving a room as early as possible. If the Txopebenta is full, try the Urresti, which is right around the corner, down a short country lane, away from the traffic, and run by a younger, friendly couple. They also rent an apartment on the premises (www.urresti.net).

Tel: (+34) 946 251 843
STAYING IN A ROMANTIC CASTLE OUTSIDE GERNIKA
EL CASTILLO DE ARTEAGA
This small French Gothic castle dating from the 13th century, a luxury 13-room boutique hotel, and the only member of Relais & Chateaux in the País Vasco, is in the village of Gautegiz-Arteaga, about a 10-minute drive north of Gernika.

Left to the elements, it was ordered restored in 1868 by the Empress Eugenie de Montijo, wife of Napoleon III. Specialists were brought in from Versailles to aid in the restoration. She then ceded it to her son, Eugenio Bonaparte.

The castle has a pool, an acclaimed restaurant with a daily 3-course menu of 37,50€, drinks not included, and a 4-course degustation menu is 60€, wine included. Double rooms are 159€ in low season, suites 200€ and 220€, with breakfast. VAT not included. A great location for that romantic getaway in the Basque country (castillodearteaga.com).

The castle is closed for the season from 28 December to 3 February.
Tel: (+34) 946 240 012
TWO COASTAL EXCURSIONS FROM GERNIKA
Leaving Gernika, you can take the BI-2235 northwest towards Mundaka, Llaida Beach, Bermeo and Bakio, or when you reach the fork in the road, you may want to keep right for the drive to Elantxobe and Lekeitio.

FOR THE EASTERN COASTAL DRIVE
Follow signs to Gautegiz-Arteaga on the BI-2238 to the village of Kortezubi. There you will find two tourist sites, the first, the prehistoric caves of Santimamiñe, and second, the interesting and beautiful Enchanted Forest of Oma. Both visits can be done the same day.

PREHISTORIC CAVE OF SANTIMAMIÑE
These cave paintings were discovered in 1916, and a year later were verified as dating from the upper Magdalenian, between 14,500 and 12,000 years ago. The paintings consist of charcoal sketches of thirty four bison, seven goats, six horses, a bear and a deer with incomplete remains of other figures. After ninety years of visits to the cave, it was closed so that extensive cleaning and conservation work could be done to maintain its treasures. The new exhibition here was born as an answer to these conservation requirements, and to allow visitors to enjoy the site in a sustainable, responsible way (www.santimamiñe.com/en/).

The visit here is a virtual one. Unlike touring a “replica” cave, as visitors do at Lascaux II in the Dordogne and the neo caves of Altamira, here visitors gather at the San Mamés hermitage to don 3-D glasses and experience an exciting, going up and down, virtual visit to the entire cave, to see how it was formed and to admire the prehistoric art within. After the virtual tour, the guide takes visitors up the hill to the mouth of the actual cave to have a glimpse at the restoration process. The whole experience lasts for around ninety minutes.

To reach the site from Gernika-Lumo, take the ring road towards Lekeitio and then the BI-638 to the roundabout at Barrutia. Continue on the BI-2238 after passing through Idokiliz, taking a right turn onto the BI-4244 to the end of the road. Leave your car in the parking lot in front of the Bar-Restaurant Lezika.

Open for guided visits daily from mid-April to mid-October and Tuesday-Sunday during the rest of the year. General admission is 5€, free for children 6 and younger.
ENCHANTED (PAINTED) FOREST OF OMA
The artist of this unique work is the famed Basque artist, painter and sculptor Agustín Ibarrola, who created this highly unusual work deep in this pine forest between 1983 and 1991. Ibarrola’s canvas is the vast pine forest of Oma, where he used vibrant colors to paint some forty-five tree trunks that sit deep in the heart of this haunting forest. His motifs vary from geometrical figures, to people to animals to giants or eyes or rainbows. This amazing and highly original forest artwork is also known as the Bosque Encantado, or Enchanted Forest. Access into the heart of this silent, mysterious art display has been greatly improved with the addition of a bannister and staircase that lead visitors down the 300 meters to the site, but the climb is still steep (www.bosquedeoma.com).
ELANTXOBE
From your visit to the Enchanted Forest and the cave of Santimamiñe, you take the BI-3237 on to this cute little fishing village, whose fishermen’s homes cling precariously to an almost vertical cliff. It’s completely authentic, rather picturesque but also somewhat forgotten. You won’t find shops or gourmet restaurants here, just one very modest hostal with Mom & Pop style dining, but you will find plenty of photo ops. The town is served by the Bizkaia Bus, and in a tiny square in the upper town, the bus must spin around on a turnstile to make its way out of the village.

If you find yourself in need of a nice lunch, drive on towards the village of Ea and stop 3.5 Kms before Ea in the village of Natxitua at the modest little Hotel Ermintxo overlooking the coast (www.euskalnet.net/ermintxo).
LEKEITIO
After you visit to Elantxobe, continue driving east via the winding coastal road through Ea and Ispaster (a beautiful drive) to the atmospheric coastal village of Lekeitio, fifty-five kilometers from Bilbao and seventy-two from San Sebastián-Donostia. Impressive, as it is unique, your last stop of the day is fiercely Basque, quite picturesque and a very pro-independence fishing community-cum summer resort.

Like Bermeo, Lekeitio was founded as a whaling port and has a very attractive harbor surrounded by colorful fishermen’s housed with their typical glassed in balconies. It now thrives on timber, fishing, canning and tourism. The excellent Ortiz brand of canned tuna, bonito de norte, is produced here. Its pretty port is filled with brightly painted red, blue and green fishing boats, cafes and restaurants with outdoor terraces and nautical shops. And the ladies of Lekeitio still carry on with traditions of mending nets and selling fish at the pier.

Lekeitio is blessed with two excellent beaches, which become extremely crowded during July and August. Playa Itzunza, 250 meters long, is the urban beach. The Lea river estuary divides it
from the Playa Karaspio east of town. The Playa Karaspio has a car park (which fills early), a bar, restaurant and lifeguards.

Lekeitio’s crown jewel is its **Gothic Basílica de Santa María de la Asunción**, considered one of the finest late Gothic edifices in the region. Note its exterior of double tiered flying buttresses and gargoyles and make sure to visit the inside to marvel at its magnificent, recently restored 16th century Gothic Flemish altarpiece.

If you venture to Lekeitio on a day trip this summer you will find it quite challenging to find a parking spot, as it is a hustling, bustling place and the few municipal lots fill up quickly, usually by 10:00 am. I sometimes have luck at the parking lot on the south side of town, when exiting town on the BI-2405 towards Markina. You’ll see the lot on your right, where there is a Bizkaia Bus stop, before reaching the **Mesón Arropain** restaurant on your left.

From your Urdaibai base you might consider taking the Bizkaia bus to Lekeitio from Gernika or Gautegiz-Arteaga, especially during the hectic months of July and August.

**OVERNIGHTING IN LEKEITIO**

**HOTEL ZUBIETA**

If you have a day or two to spend in this area and want to use Lekeitio as your base, I highly recommend an overnight at the charming and reasonably priced 12-room hotel run by the same owners as the Palacio de Urgoiti. It is a charming, atmospheric and comfortable 3-star inn sitting on the grounds of the Zubieta Palace. The restored 18th century former stables has its own parking, a library, bar bistro and is bike friendly. Its twelve rooms and eight suites are nicely decorated, have a/c, safe, iron, and desk, satellite TV and Internet access. It also offers four apartments sleeping 4 persons each.
While the Hotel Zubieta sits away from the tourist crowds, it is an easy walk into town, and close to the Mesón Arropain restaurant (hotelzubieta.com).
Tel: (+34) 946 843 030

PALACIO OXANGOITI
This is a very attractive property, an 18th century noble home, was first converted into a restaurant and is now a beautiful seven room, family-run inn. It sits in a prime spot, just steps from city hall, the Basílica de Santa María, the harbor and about 100 yards from the city beach. Each of the individually decorated rooms (one suite, five doubles and one single) has custom made furniture and comes with Internet access, TV, private bath with hair dryer. Some exterior rooms have Juliet balconies overlooking the square. The hotel has an elevator for handicapped access. Laundry service is provided.

While the inn does not provide bar service or meals other than breakfast, nor does it have a lounge or private parking, it does make a very attractive and reasonably priced choice for those who wish a base in the heart of town and aren’t disturbed by church bells and a bit of weekend noise from the bars. The hotel does not have a garage, but the very friendly owner will arrange parking for guests (www.oxangoiti.net).
Tel: (+34) 944 650 555
HEADING INLAND FROM LEKEITIO

Lying inland, in the Lea Aribai valley a half-hour drive south of Lekeitio, is the medieval village of Markina-Xemein, known as the “cradle of pelota” because many of the world’s pelota champions hail from here. The locals even refer to its frontón as the “university of pelota”. The town has managed to preserve a fair amount of its monumental heritage of palaces, typical Basque tower-houses and convents. It’s a somewhat sleepy place, but you can stop and pick up a bottle of Gurrutxaga rosé txakolí, artisan Idiazábal cheese or even a handwoven wicker scoop, a cesta for a cesta punta.

You can head back to Gernika-Lumo from Markina following the BI-2224, passing through the tiny villages of Ziortza-Bolibar (birthplace of Simón Bolívar de la Remendería), and Munitibar-Gerrikaitz.

Or take the BI-3231 at Munitibar to the Balcony of Biscay.

There are several wonderfully scenic lookouts in Urdaibai that one can access by car. The Balcony of Biscay is an especially beautiful Mirador, lookout point, where one can view the mountainous scenery of the Urdaibai and its huge expanse of forests. Legend has it that this area was where witches used to gather at nightfall; thus, the locals avoided passing through this place after dark.

To reach the Balcony of Biscay from Gernika, go south on the BI-635 from Gernika and turn left (east) at Zugaztieta. Passing through the hamlet of Ajuria, continue on the BI-3231 towards Munitibar, to km 7.4, where you’ll find the viewpoint, looking north into the Urdaibai.
FOR YOUR WESTERN COASTAL EXCURSION

After leaving Gernika, take the BI-2235 up to the surfers’ paradise of Mundaka. I have enjoyed a quick visit or two to this little fishing port with its maze of narrow, winding streets. It has become a surfing town because of its famous left break, but I don’t recommend an overnight here. You’ll find far more charming lodgings in other parts of the Urdaibai than the hotels Puerto or Atalaya, although there is a charming restaurant one kilometer south of town, over looking the river, opposite Laida Beach, Portuondo (www.restauranteportuondo.com), with free shuttle service from Gernika and Bermeo.

BERMEO, THE FORMER WHALERS’ VILLAGE

After a brief stop in Mundaka, I suggest you continue on to the historic whaling port of Bermeo. It is the most important fishing port of the several fishing towns along the coast. It became prosperous from its whaling industry and still incorporates a whale in its coat of arms. In the 1500s Bermeo maintained the largest fishing flotilla in all of Spain. The ships for Columbus’s second voyage to America were built here, and its proud maritime history is displayed in the town’s excellent Fishermen’s Museum. The colorful harbor is lined with four and five story fishermen’s homes with glassed in balconies. A fish auction is still held at the pier on weekdays, between 7:00 and 8:00 am, and again at 6:00 pm.

Port of Bermeo

The town also serves as a surprising outdoor sculpture museum. If you park your car in the large parking lot above the town, next to the park below the cemetery, and walk down to the port, following the “alde zaharra” signs, you will first pass through the medieval gate, the Arco de San Vicente. Here you will see the bronze statue of the “Lady Fishmongers”, then the sculpture “They’re Coming!” at the Plazuela de Torrontero. Down at the old port is “The Last Wave, the
Last Breath” by Enrique Zubia. Works in bronze by native son Néstor Basterretxea can be found in the Old Port as well.

To appreciate this working port town, you must explore the port area. Once there, take a walk around the village, checking out the well-kept cemetery overlooking the sea, and visit the Museum of the Fisherman, El Museo del Pescador, or Arrantzaleen Museoa in Basque, in the Torre Ercilla.

**MUSEUM OF THE FISHERMEN**
The museum, housed in the 16th century Ercilla Tower, a National Monument, is one of the few museums dedicated to the life, habits, work, techniques of the Basque fishermen, along with their organization into guilds, their navigational instruments, models of their traditional fishing boats and the history of their voyages. It’s quite fascinating. Although there are no signs in English, visitors are given an English language pamphlet. There is an elevator for handicapped access.

The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 to 7:00 pm, and on Sunday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. General admission is 3€, with a discount for seniors and free for children 12 and younger and free on 18 May and select holidays. Many sailors from Bermeo accompanied Columbus on his 2nd voyage, and the ships for his second expedition were built here.

**WHALING SHIP AITA GURIA**
This replica of a 17th century whaling boat, docked across the way from the tourist office, serves at an interpretation center of whale fishing and can be visited Wednesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, and Friday and Saturday from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. On Sundays and bank holidays it’s open from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Closed Mondays. Tickets are 3€ and is handicapped accessible (www.aitaguria.bermeo.org). Closed until Easter 2016 for repairs.

Tel: (+34) 946 179 121

**CATAMARAN EXCURSION**
This very enjoyable one hour catamaran ride, offered by Hegaluze, departing daily in the summer from the port and takes its passengers around the bay and along the coast on the following routes: The Caves of Ogoño-Elantxobe Route, The San Juan de Gaztelugatxe Route, and the Gaztelugatxe Sunset Route. Cost is from 12€ to 16€ for adults, depending on the route. One must reserve in advance by email or by calling. The boat holds 66 passengers. Check the schedule at: www.hegaluze.com.

Tel or WhatsApp: (+34) 666 791 021

**MATXITXAKO LIGHTHOUSE**
This headland at Cape de Matxitxako is the most northerly point on this stretch of coast and offers superb views from the “new lighthouse”, built in 1909. Located between Bakio and Bermeo, it’s a great spot for whale watching and spotting migratory birds. The old tower, dating from 1852, is no longer used.
SAN JUAN DE GAZTELUGATXE
Gaztelugatxe, which means ‘castle peak’ in Basque, is an overpowering rock that resembles a castle in the water. It is located in the municipality of Bermeo between the Matxitxako Cape and the village of Bakio. On the rock sits a small chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist. It’s joined to the land by a narrow bridge built on rocks leading to the 231 steps that lead up to the hermitage.

The origin of the shrine dates back to the 10th century, when tenant farmers of the area built their own parish church on top of the island. Legend says that after St. John the Baptist disembarked in Bermeo, he reached the island in three huge steps, leaving traces of his footprints along the way. In the 16th century and there after, Gaztelugatxe underwent years of pillage and plundering by corsairs and pirates. In 1596, ships from La Rochele docked at Gaztelugatxe and stole everything they could find, throwing its hermit off the cliffs.

The shrine of Gaztelugatxe became a place of pilgrimage for sailors and for locals alike. It is a tradition for who make it up the 231 steps to the chapel to ring the chapel bell three times and make a wish, a real cardiovascular workout with extraordinary views.

On the feast day of St. John, June 24, there is a traditional romería, a celebration when crowds flock in pilgrimage to the chapel to give thanks to the saint. Another custom is for the fishermen, arrantzales, to visit the chapel before the start of the fishing season to ask the saint to grant them good luck in their labors and a great bounty of fish.

Masses in the shrine are held on June 23 and 24, July 31, August 29 and December 30. The shrine is also open on Saturday mornings during Holy Week and in the summer.
After your workout, and for a fabulous gourmet lunch with stunning ocean views, head straight to the Restaurant Eneperi, right on the highway overlooking the hermitage. The restaurant (www.eneperi.com) has a charming, updated décor and superb cuisine. But you must reserve in advance for weekends, as it’s very popular among gourmands from Bilbao. Closed Monday.

This scenic drive also passes the 11th century hermitage of Hermitage of San Pelaio, one of the jewels of Vizcayan Romanesque architecture. It’s on the left and worth a stop. There is a large portico with wooden shelter surrounding the entire perimeter, a common characteristic of Vizcaya churches and hermitages. It only opens for mass on Saturdays and Sundays. On the feast day of San Pelaio, June 26, wine and cookies are served after mass to those who make the pilgrimage to the shrine.

HERMITAGE OF SAN PELAIO
This scenic drive passes this 11th century hermitage, one of the jewels of Vizcayan Romanesque architecture. It’s on the left and worth a stop. There is a large portico with wooden shelter surrounding the entire perimeter, a common characteristic of Vizcaya churches and hermitages. It only opens for mass on Saturdays and Sundays. On the feast day of San Pelaio, June 26, wine and cookies are served after mass to those who make the pilgrimage to the shrine.

BAKIO
and stops in the beach resort town of Bakio, a bit blighted by ugly high rise condos but surrounded by beautiful soft hills covered with vineyards, where some of Bizkaia’s Txakoli wines are produced. The lovely sand beach of Bakio, one kilometer in length, is the longest beach on the Vizcaya coast. It’s known for its clean, crystal clear waters and flies the EU blue flag, an accreditation of cleanliness. It attracts swimmers and surfers alike. In this pleasant town beach you’ll find plenty of free parking, a children’s playground and several pintxos bars with outdoor terraces at the far north end, the best of which is Itxas Ondo at the port.

THE BEACH AT BAKIO
The lovely sand beach of Bakio, one kilometer in length, is the longest beach the Vizcaya coast. It’s known for its clean, crystal clear waters and flies the EU blue flag, an accreditation of cleanliness. It attracts swimmers and surfers alike. At this beach town beach you’ll find plenty of free parking, a children’s playground and several pintxos bars with outdoor terraces at the far north end, the best of which is Itxas Ondo at the port.

The well-stocked tourist office in Bakio, located on the highway, is open daily from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 to 8:00 pm, except during the winter when it’s closed on Mondays. The folks there can provide you with a map to lead you to the area txakolina vineyards (www.bakio.org).
HOTEL RESTAURANTE JOSHE MARI

This small hotel in town offers spic and span, very reasonably priced double rooms for 60€ and truly great meals by chef-proprietress Gregoria Rentería, and is extremely popular with locals. There are two excellent chuleta menus available Monday-Friday at 15€ and 25€, as well as a more gastronomic menu for 45 € (www.hotelrestaurantejoshemari.com). Or stop at the cute and cozy bar for a glass of txakoli, or coffee in the immaculately tended garden, if nothing else.

Tel: (+34) 946 194 005

VISITING A TXAKOLÍ VINEYARD IN BIZKAIA

The wonderfully refreshing, light, green appley tart and slightly effervescent white wine of the Basque country, which you may not yet have heard of, is txakoli or txakolina, enjoyed all year long in the pintxos bars and restaurants throughout the region. With its lower alcohol content (9.5-10.5%) and its fresh taste, it goes perfectly with the region’s bounty of glorious seafood.

The production of the Basque Country’s txakoli, is divided into three separate appellations, called Denominaciones de Origen, one of which is found around the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve, the D.O. Bizkaiko Txakolina (www.bizkaikotxakolina.org). There are 45 wineries in Bizkaia, the largest being Itsasmendi in the Urdaibai in Gernika-Lomo, with 35 hectares of vineyards.

Although white txakoli, made from the hondarrabi zuri grape, (sometimes rounded out with Folle-Blanche, mune mahatsa), represents between 80-95% of the production, you will find rosé and red txakoli, made with the hondarrabi belza grape, along with the new vendimia tardía, sweet, Sauterne-type wines and even an espumoso, or sparkling txakoli.
You’ll notice when ordering a glass of txakoli in the Basque country pintxos bars, the waiter will begin the pouring of the wine close to the glass then pull the bottle away and arc it high above his shoulder, pouring a two foot stream from the bottle into the short, wide rimmed txakolí tumbler to aerate the wine, creating a burst of bubbles in the glass.

Visitors to Urdaibai should try one of the D.O.’s best labels; the barrel fermented Chardonnay style Itsasmendi No.7, the Gorrondona Doniene barrel fermented white or the Gurrutxaga rosé. You can find these, and others, in Gernika-Lumo at the Urdaibai Vinoteca at Plaza Ibarra de San Juan, 6, across from the children’s playground.

**DONIENE GORRONDONA TXAKOLINA**

The 10-hectare vineyards, located in the hills above the seaside village of Bakio, in the Uribe district, produces the widely proclaimed barrel fermented Doniene white Txakoli, as well as a Gorrondona white and a fine red Txakoli, the Gorrondona Red, which is made from 150-year old vines, with the predominate flavors of dark cherries and mushrooms. Utterly delicious! They also produce Doniene Apardune, a sparkling brut, plus Doniene and Herbal eau-de-vie.

The vineyard can be visited year around with advance reservations. Be sure to check out their food and txakoli pairing menus for 35€, 50€ and 75€, plus tax (www.donienegorrondona.com)

Tel: (+34) 946 194 795