

Bayonne

Basque Country · Spain

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Bayonne is a historic city in the French Basque Country, where the Nive and Adour rivers meet. It is about 6 km from the Atlantic coast and a short ride from Biarritz.

The old town has a Gothic cathedral, half-timbered houses on the river quays and walls built by *Vauban*. The city is also known for chocolate, cured ham and one of the biggest summer festivals in France.

It suits a day or two of walking, museums and food. It also works as a calmer and cheaper base for the coast and the Basque villages.

When to visit

Late spring and early autumn are the best times: warm days, fewer crowds and open terraces. Summer is hot and humid. Rain is common in most months, and winter is mild but grey.

The **Fêtes de Bayonne** is the event to plan around. It lasts five days in July. Check the dates before you book. The whole city wears white and red, and the streets fill with music, bodegas and crowds. Book rooms months ahead, or avoid those days if you want quiet.

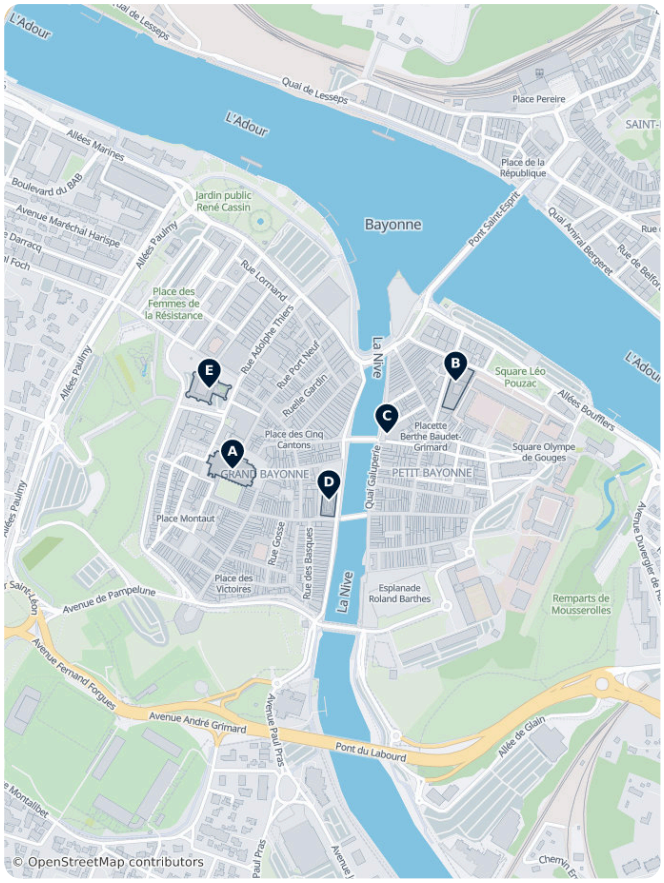
The ham fair (Foire au Jambon) takes place in April. It is a good time for food lovers.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for cycling	11° / 17° Feels like 8°	5° / -1°	15 rainy days · Dry air
February	Good Good for cycling	12° / 18° Feels like 9°	6° / -1°	12 rainy days · Dry air
March	Good Good for cycling	15° / 22° Feels like 12°	7° / 2°	13 rainy days · Dry air
April	Good Good for cycling	18° / 24°	9° / 5°	14 rainy days · Dry air
May	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 28°	12° / 8°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 32°	16° / 12°	12 rainy days · Calm winds
July	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 35°	17° / 14°	Humid air · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	28° / 37°	18° / 15°	Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 33°	16° / 11°	Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 28°	13° / 7°	12 rainy days · Dry air
November	Good Good for cycling	15° / 22°	9° / 3°	16 rainy days · Dry air
December	Fair Fair for cycling	12° / 17° Feels like 9°	6° / 0°	14 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Cathédrale Sainte-Marie is the city's main landmark. It is a large Gothic church from the 13th to 15th centuries, with two tall spires added in the 19th century. It is part of the UNESCO listing for the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela in France. The cloister next to it is also worth a visit.
- B Musée Bonnat-Helleu is the city's art museum. It reopened in late 2025 after a long renovation. It holds paintings by Spanish, British and French masters and a large collection of drawings.
- C Musée Basque et de l'histoire de Bayonne is the best place to understand local culture. It covers Basque daily life, seafaring, crafts and the history of Bayonne. It is in Petit Bayonne, near the Nive.
- D Halles de Bayonne is the covered market beside the Nive. It is the centre of local food shopping. It is being renovated, so check whether a temporary market hall is in use.
- E Château-Vieux is the old castle beside the cathedral quarter. It is part of the city's old defences and is best seen from the outside.
- The **ramparts and the Citadelle** were built or improved by *Vauban* in the 17th century. You can walk along parts of the old walls on the edge of Grand Bayonne.

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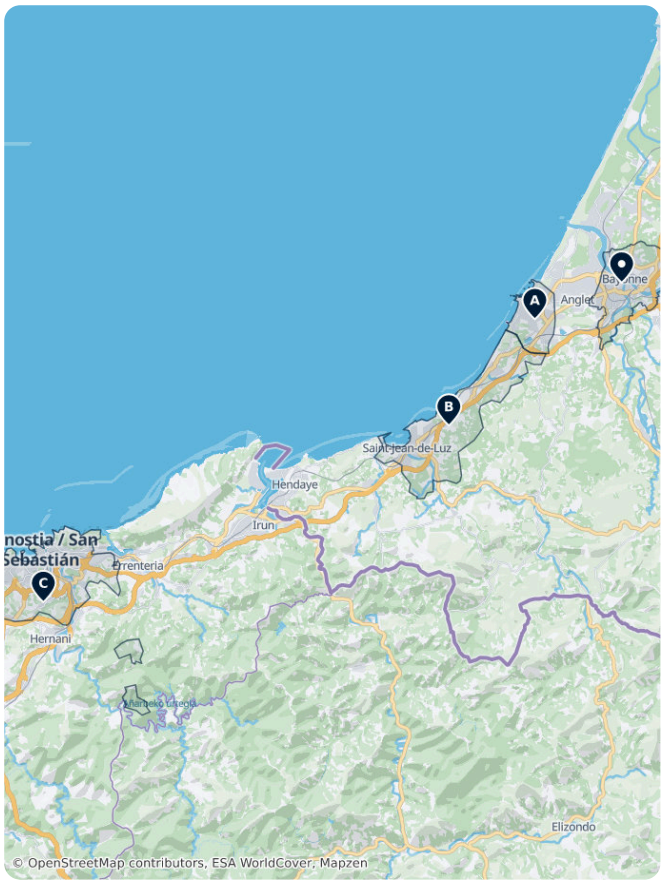
What to experience

- **Join the Fêtes de Bayonne.** For five days in July, locals and visitors dress in white with red scarves and belts. Expect parades, street music and late nights. It is the best time to see the city's party side.
- **Taste chocolate in the old town.** Bayonne has made chocolate for centuries, since Jewish refugees from Iberia settled here. Try hot chocolate or tablets in the shops and tea rooms under the arcades of the Rue du Port-Neuf.
- **Watch Basque pelota.** This fast ball game is played against a wall, often with a bare hand or a wicker basket. Ask at the tourist office where matches are held.
- **Walk the quays at sunset.** The terraces along the Nive fill up in the evening.

Day trips

Bayonne is close to the beaches, the Basque villages and the Spanish border.

- A Biarritz: about 15 minutes by bus or car. A seaside resort with big beaches and surf.
- **Bidart and Guéthary**: about 20 to 25 minutes by train or car. Small coastal villages with beaches and cliff paths.
- B Saint-Jean-de-Luz: about 30 minutes by train or car. A fishing port with a calm bay and a pedestrian centre.
- **Espelette**: about 30 minutes by car. A village known for its red peppers, which hang on house fronts in autumn.
- **Sare and La Rhune**: about 45 minutes by car. A traditional Basque village near the mountain La Rhune, which has a rack railway to the top.
- C San Sebastián, Spain: about 1 hour by car. A famous food city with a city beach and many pintxos bars.
- **Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port**: about 1 hour by train or car. A walled village at the start of a French route of the Camino de Santiago.



Where to explore

Other destinations nearby:

- For a seaside resort with surf beaches, visit Biarritz.
- For a fishing port with a sheltered beach, visit Saint-Jean-de-Luz.
- For the border town on the French side of the Bidasoa, visit Hendaye.
- For food and a city beach in Spain, visit San Sebastián.

Getting there

- **By air**: Biarritz Pays Basque Airport (BIQ) is a few kilometres from the centre. It serves Bayonne, Biarritz and Anglet, with mostly seasonal and European routes. Taxis and local buses link it to the city. Bordeaux and Bilbao have more routes and are each about 2 hours away by road.
- **By train**: Bayonne station is on the line from Bordeaux to Irun, with direct TGV trains from Paris. Regional trains run to Hendaye and Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port. Book on SNCF Connect. The station is on the north bank of the Adour, a short walk from the old town across the river.
- **By bus**: Local buses connect Bayonne with Biarritz and the nearby coast.
- **By car**: The A63 motorway passes close to the city, from Bordeaux in the north and from Spain in the south.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The old town, the quays and the main museums are close together. Walking is the easiest way to get around.
- **Public transport**: The Txik Txak bus network serves Bayonne, Biarritz and Anglet. Check routes, tickets and timetables on Txik Txak.
- **Cycling**: The centre is mostly flat, so cycling works well.
- **Taxi**: Taxis are useful for the airport and late evenings.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not for the old town. A car is useful for the Basque villages and the mountains inland.
- **Parking**: Streets in the old centre are narrow and parking is limited. Use a paid car park at the edge of the centre and walk.
- **Tolls**: Parts of the A63 motorway are tolled.

Food & drink

Bayonne is famous for **chocolate and ham**. Bayonne ham is cured with local salt and has European protected status. Look also for piperade (peppers and tomato with egg), grilled fish and gâteau basque, a cake filled with cream or cherry jam. Espelette pepper and local chocolate make good gifts.

For eating, start at Halles de Bayonne and the streets around it. Cafés and bars cluster along the Nive quays and in Petit Bayonne. Chocolate shops and tea rooms line the Rue du Port-Neuf.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

Bayonne is safe for visitors. Pickpocketing can happen in crowds, especially during the Fêtes de Bayonne. Keep bags closed and phones out of back pockets.

During the Fêtes, streets are crowded and many people drink heavily. Plan your way back to your room early, and avoid driving.

History

Bayonne started as a Roman fort and grew into a port on the Adour. It was under English rule for about three centuries, until France took it in 1451. Trade, shipping and a strong Basque and Gascon culture shaped the city.

You can still see this past today. Cathédrale Sainte-Marie dates from the Middle Ages. In the 17th century *Vauban*, the king's military engineer, strengthened the walls and built the Citadelle.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal settled in the Saint-Esprit district across the Adour. They helped make Bayonne a centre of chocolate making. The museum quarter in Petit Bayonne, with Musée Basque et de l'histoire de Bayonne, shows the Basque side of this history.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

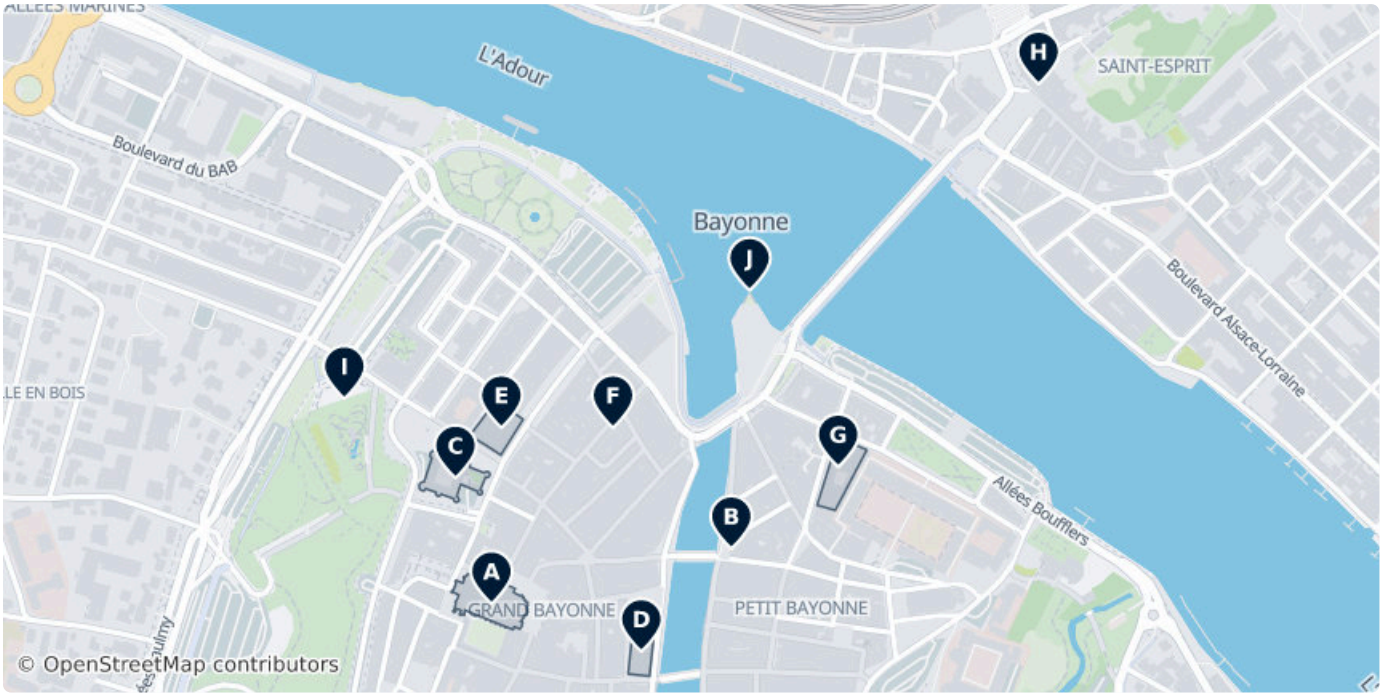
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Bayonne Must-Sees

Bayonne is defined by its location at the confluence of the Nive and Adour rivers and its deep Basque heritage. This selection highlights the city's architectural landmarks, including the 13th-century Gothic Cathedral and the medieval Château-Vieux. Cultural insights are found at the Musée Basque and the fine arts collection of Musée Bonnat-Helleu. The city's culinary traditions are represented by the historic Daranatz chocolate shop and the vibrant Halles de Bayonne market, which features regional specialties like Bayonne ham and local cheeses.





A Bayonne Cathedral

The Cathedral of Saint Mary of Bayonne or the Cathedral of Our Lady of Bayonne, commonly known as Bayonne Cathedral, is a Roman Catholic...

Place Louis Pasteur, 64100 Bayonne, France
(43.49050, -1.47728)



B Basque Museum in Bayonne

Housed in the 17th-century Maison Dagourette, this museum features over 2,000 objects detailing Basque history, crafts, and maritime traditions.

4 Rue Marengo, Bayonne 64100, France
(43.49108, -1.47380)

Mo	Closed
Tu–We	10:00–18:00
Th	13:00–20:00
Fr–Su	10:00–18:00

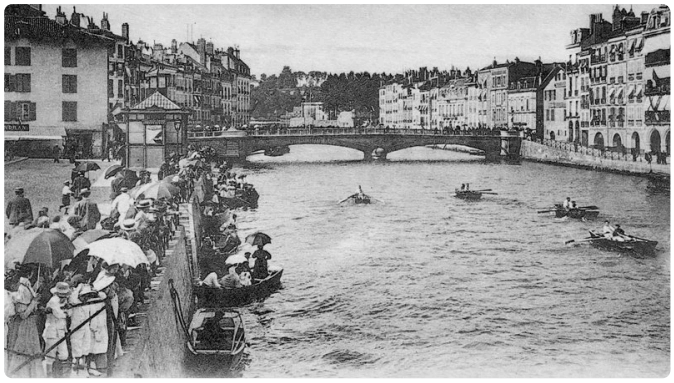
musee-basque.com, +33 5 59 59 08 98



C Château-Vieux

Château-Vieux, also known as the Old Castle of Bayonne, is a castle in the commune of Bayonne, in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques département of...

2 Place du Château Vieux, Bayonne 64100, France
(43.49183, -1.47780)



D Halles de Bayonne

A riverside covered market hosting local producers of Bayonne ham, Ossau-Iraty cheese, and traditional Basque pastries.

Quai Dominique Roquebert, 64100 Bayonne, France
(43.49000, -1.47511)

Mo–Th	07:00–13:30
Fr	07:00–14:30
Sa	06:00–14:30
Su	08:00–14:30

E Galeries Lafayette

Branch of the historic French department store offering fashion, beauty products, and home goods.

(43.49236, -1.47714)

Mo–Sa	10:00–20:00

F Daranatz

Established in 1890, this artisanal chocolatier is one of the oldest in Bayonne, specializing in traditional dark chocolate and pralines.

(43.49236, -1.47552)



G Musée Bonnat-Helleu

Fine arts museum housing the private collection of painter Léon Bonnat, including works by Rubens, El Greco, Goya, and Ingres.

5 Rue Jacques Laffitte, Bayonne 64100, France
(43.49194, -1.47225)

Nov-Apr Mo–Th	10:00–18:00
Nov-Apr Fr	12:00–20:00
Nov-Apr Sa–Su	10:00–18:00
May-Oct Mo–Th	10:00–19:00
May-Oct Fr	12:00–21:00
May-Oct Sa–Su	10:00–19:00

mbh.bayonne.fr, +33 5 59 46 63 60

H Bains rituels juifs ou Mikve

A 17th-century Jewish ritual bath located in the Saint-Esprit district, reflecting the history of the Sephardic community in Bayonne.

(43.49597, -1.46934)

I Monument aux morts

A memorial commemorating citizens who died in the World Wars, located near the city's ramparts and the town hall.

4 Avenue du 11 Novembre 1918, Bayonne 64100, France
(43.49266, -1.47942)

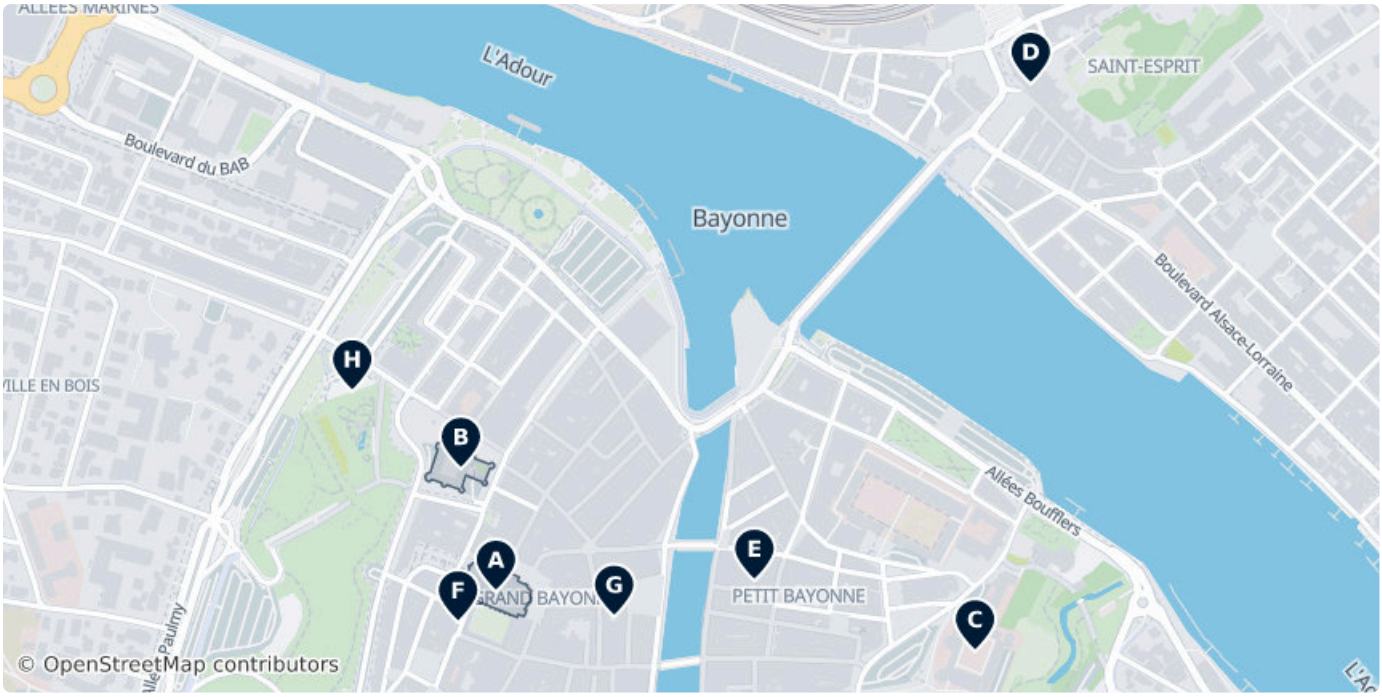
J Échauguette

A historic stone watchtower situated on the city's fortifications, providing a vantage point over the Adour river.

(43.49380, -1.47353)

Bayonne Heritage Sites

Bayonne's historic landscape is defined by its diverse architectural layers, from the 13th-century Gothic Cathédrale Sainte-Marie to the defensive fortifications of Château-Vieux and Château-Neuf. This collection highlights the city's evolution, featuring the Sephardic Jewish heritage preserved in the ritual baths of Saint-Esprit and well-preserved timber-framed residences like Maison Saubist and Maison Lapeyre. These landmarks represent the military, religious, and social history of the Basque Country's capital.





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2 Place du Château Vieux, Bayonne 64100, France
(43.49183, -1.47780)

C Château-Neuf

A 15th-century fortress built by King Charles VII to reinforce the city's defenses after the Hundred Years' War. It overlooks the Petit Bayonne district and formerly served as military barracks.

Rue Monseigneur François Lacroix, 64100 Bayonne, France (43.48986, -1.47017)

D Bains rituels juifs ou Mikve

Located in the Saint-Esprit neighborhood, these ritual baths are a significant remnant of the Sephardic Jewish community that settled in Bayonne during the 16th century.

(43.49597, -1.46934)

E Maison Lapeyre

A traditional timber-framed house located in the historic center, showcasing the characteristic colorful wooden beams and narrow architecture typical of medieval Bayonne.

8 Rue de Coursic, Bayonne 64100, France (43.49062, -1.47344)

F Maison Saubist

One of the oldest residential buildings in the city, dating back to the late 15th century and featuring architectural elements from the transition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

21 Rue de Luc, Bayonne 64100, France (43.49018, -1.47784)

G Hôtel de Belzunce

A 17th-century private mansion in Grand Bayonne, notable for its stone facade and historical role as a residence for the local nobility.

5 Rue Bernadou, Bayonne 64100, France (43.49024, -1.47553)

H Monument aux morts

A war memorial commemorating the citizens of Bayonne who lost their lives in the World Wars, featuring sculptural work by artist Ernest Gabard.

4 Avenue du 11 Novembre 1918, Bayonne 64100, France (43.49266, -1.47942)

DATA SOURCES

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