San Sebastián

Basque Country · Spain

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

San Sebastián (Donostia in Basque) is a city on the Bay of Biscay in northern Spain, about 20 km from the French border. It has a curved city beach, a compact Old Town and green hills at both ends of the bay.

It suits a relaxed trip of two to four nights. Most people come to walk, swim in summer and eat pintxos, the small snacks served in the bars. The city is also a good base for the Basque coast and the French Basque Country.

When to visit

Summer is the warmest and driest time for the beach. Spring and autumn are mild, with frequent rain. Winter is cool and wet.

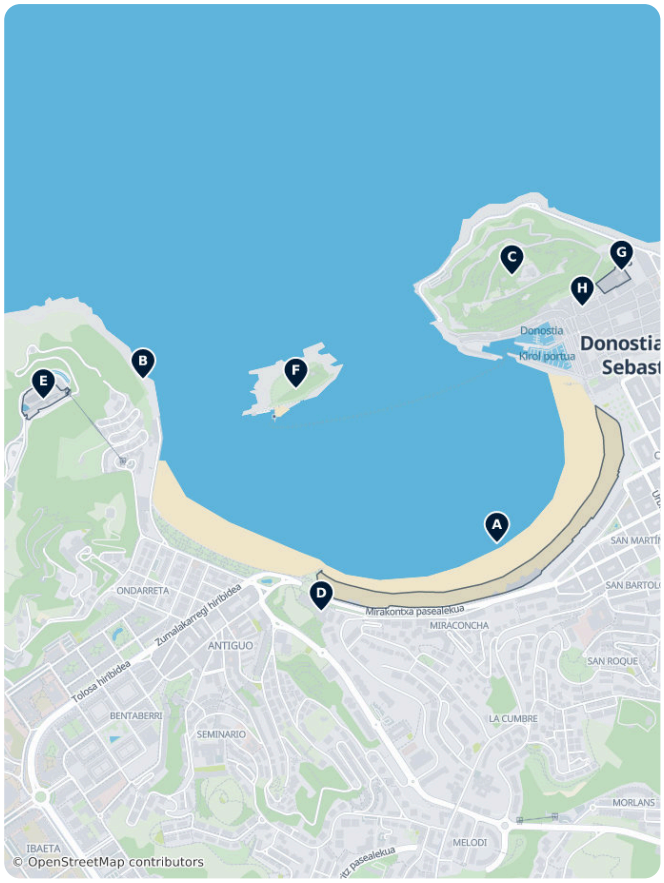
The biggest event is the San Sebastián International Film Festival. It runs in September and has been held since 1953. Screenings and parties fill the city, so book hotels early.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for hiking	11° / 15° Feels like 7°	8° / 3°	15 rainy days · Dry air
February	Good Good for hiking	12° / 16° Feels like 7°	8° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
March	Good Good for hiking	13° / 18° Feels like 10°	9° / 5°	13 rainy days · Dry air
April	Good Good for hiking	15° / 20° Feels like 12°	10° / 7°	14 rainy days · Dry air
May	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 24°	13° / 10°	14 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 27°	16° / 13°	
July	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	18° / 15°	Humid air
August	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 30°	19° / 16°	Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 28°	17° / 14°	
October	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 25°	15° / 10°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Fair Fair for hiking	15° / 19° Feels like 11°	11° / 6°	16 rainy days · Dry air
December	Fair Fair for hiking	12° / 16° Feels like 8°	9° / 4°	15 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, August, September

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

Top sights



- A Kontxa hondartza is the city's main beach, a long curve of sand along the bay. It is the place for a swim or a walk on the promenade.
- At the western end of the bay, at the foot of Mount Igueldo, B The Comb of the Wind is a group of steel sculptures by *Eduardo Chillida*. They sit in the rocks, and the waves hit the nearby blowholes.
- C Urgull is the hill next to the Old Town. Walk up for views over the bay and the city.
- D Palacio Real de Miramar was finished in 1893 as a summer home for Queen Maria Cristina. The gardens are open to the public at set hours.
- E Mount Igueldo Amusement Park sits on top of Mount Igueldo. A funicular from the foot of the hill has run to the top since 1912.
- F Santa Clara Island lies in the middle of the bay. It has a lighthouse and a small beach that appears at low tide.
- G San Telmo Museoa is in a former 16th-century monastery at the foot of Urgull. It shows the culture and history of the Basque people.
- H Santa Maria basilika is a basilica in the heart of the Old Town, where most pintxos bars are.

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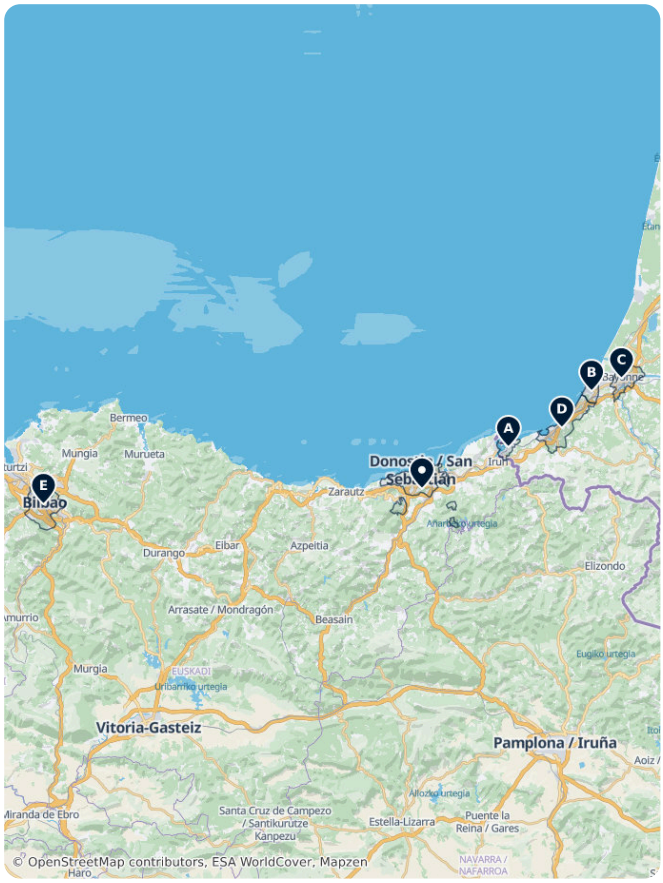
What to experience

Events and rituals worth planning around:

- **Tamborrada**: on 20 January, groups dressed as cooks and soldiers march and play drums through the city for 24 hours.
- **Semana Grande**: in mid-August, with fireworks over the bay every night.
- Jazzaldia: a jazz festival in the last week of July.
- Basque Week: in early September, ending with the rowing race for the Flag of La Concha.
- Boat to Santa Clara island: boats leave from the port. The direct crossing takes about 5 minutes. They run daily from June to September.

Day trips

- **Pasaia**: a working harbour about 5 km east of the centre, set at the foot of Mount Ulia.
- **Hondarribia**: about 15 km east, next to the airport. It has a walled old quarter and a fishing harbour area.
- Ⓐ Hendaye: about 40 minutes by Euskotren from Amara station, with trains every 30 minutes. It is across the border in France, with a long beach.
- Ⓑ Biarritz, Ⓒ Bayonne and Ⓓ Saint-Jean-de-Luz: continue from Hendaye on French regional trains. Biarritz is a seaside resort, and Bayonne has an old town.
- Ⓔ Bilbao: about 2 hours 40 minutes by Euskotren, with trains every hour. The trip is long, but Bilbao has a lot to see.



Where to explore

Across the border in the French Basque Country:

- Hendaye is the closest, at the end of the Euskotren line.
- Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Biarritz are seaside towns further up the coast.
- Bayonne is a city with a historic centre.

Getting there

- **By air**: San Sebastián Airport is in neighbouring Hondarribia, about 15 km east. Most flights are within Spain, mainly to Madrid. Hourly Lurraldebus line BI01 runs between the airport and the city bus station. Many visitors fly into Biarritz (about 50 km) or Bilbao (about 98 km) instead.
- **By train**: The Renfe station is a 10-minute walk from the centre. Renfe trains to Madrid take about 5.5 hours or more. Direct Alvia trains to Barcelona take about 6 hours. Euskotren trains from Amara station go to Bilbao (about 2 hours 40 minutes, hourly) and to Hendaye in France. Book Renfe on Renfe and Euskotren on Euskotren.
- **By bus**: The central bus station is underground, next to the train station.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Dbus city buses cover the town. Timetables and fares are on Dbus.
- **On foot**: The centre, the Old Town and the beaches are all close together. Walking is the easiest way to see the city.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The centre, Old Town and beaches are close together and mostly flat.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Cycling is practical along the bay, but the hills at both ends are steep.

Food & drink

Pintxos are the main local food. They are small snacks on bread, served on the bar counter. Many people move from bar to bar and order one or two things in each.

The Old Town is the best-known area for pintxos bars. The city has many Michelin-starred restaurants so book far ahead for those.

Two local drinks: txakoli, a dry, slightly sparkling white wine from the coast near Getaria, and cider, which is poured from a height straight from the barrel. The cider museum Sagardoetxea - Euskal Sagardoaren Museoa is in nearby Astigarraga.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Churros · Churros con Chocolate
Fried dough sticks served with a thick, dark hot chocolate for dipping — a classic Spanish breakfast or late-night snack.

LUNCH

Paella Valenciana
A saffron-scented rice dish cooked in a wide, shallow pan. The traditional Valencian version uses chicken, rabbit, and green beans — best eaten at midday.

Gazpacho
A cold, blended soup of raw tomatoes, cucumber, pepper, garlic, olive oil, and vinegar, originally from Andalusia. Served as a drink or a starter, especially in summer.

DINNER

Pulpo a la Gallega
Boiled octopus sliced onto a wooden board and dressed with olive oil, coarse salt, and smoked paprika — a signature dish of Galicia.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Jamón Ibérico
Dry-cured ham from acorn-fed Iberian pigs, sliced paper-thin and eaten on its own or with bread. The finest grade, jamón ibérico de bellota, is one of Spain's most prized products.

Tortilla Española
A thick potato and egg omelette, served warm or at room temperature, found in virtually every bar in Spain. Often eaten as a tapa or a quick meal.

Patatas Bravas
Fried potato chunks served with a spicy tomato sauce or aioli — one of the most common tapas across the country.

Pintxos
Small snacks anchored to slices of bread with a toothpick, the Basque Country's answer to tapas. Found in bar counters across San Sebastián and Bilbao, often with elaborate toppings.

Croquetas
Crispy breaded cylinders with a creamy béchamel filling, typically made with jamón, bacalà (salt cod), or mushrooms.

DRINKS

Rioja Wine · Vino de Rioja

Spain's best-known wine region produces full-bodied reds from Tempranillo grapes, aged in oak. The crianza, reserva, and gran reserva labels indicate increasing age and complexity.

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Safety & health

San Sebastián has no special safety issues for visitors. Use normal care with bags in crowded places such as festivals.

Swim only when the beach flag is green, and take care with sea currents, especially at Zurriola.

The European emergency number is 112.

History

The city received its charter in the 12th century. In 1813, British and Portuguese troops attacked the town after a siege and burned most of it. Only the street at the foot of the hill, now 31 August Street, survived. Walk the Old Town streets to see what was rebuilt.

From 1885, Queen Maria Cristina spent every summer here. She stayed at Palacio Real de Miramar, and the royal visits made the city a fashionable seaside resort. San Sebastián was a European Capital of Culture in 2016, together with Wrocław.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Spain at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

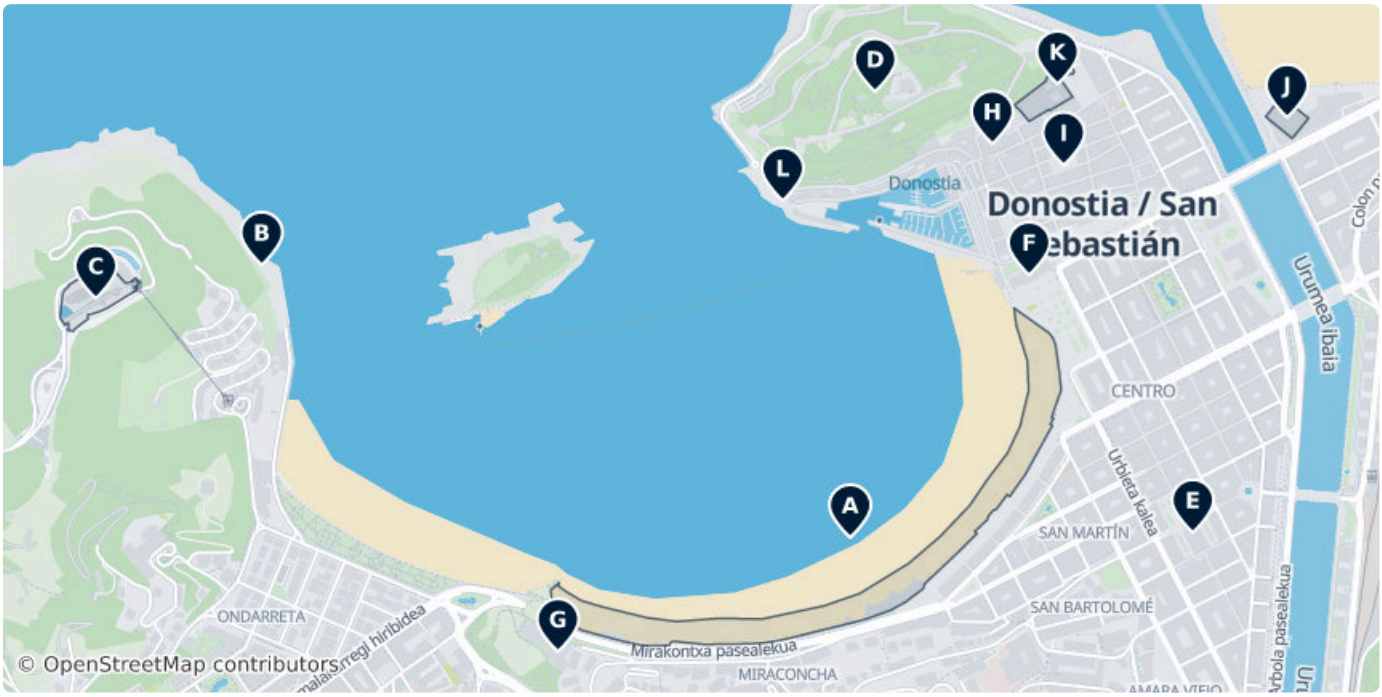
Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Spanish

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Donostia/San Sebastián Essentials

This collection highlights the architectural and natural landmarks of Donostia/San Sebastián. It spans from the Belle Époque elegance of the City Hall and Miramar Palace to the contemporary Basque art of Eduardo Chillida's Peine del Viento. Explore the historic Old Town via Plaza de la Constitución, visit the 18th-century Basilica of Saint Mary of the Chorus, and view the city from the heights of Monte Urgull and Monte Igueldo. The list also includes the Kursaal Congress Centre, a modern symbol of the city's international film and jazz festivals.





A La Concha Beach

The Beach of La Concha is a crescent shaped urban seaboard of the city of San Sebastián located at the Bay of La Concha in the Basque...

Spain (43.31658, -1.99038)

donostia.org/ServiciosEspeciales/Playas.nsf/conchac



B Peine del Viento

The Comb of the Wind is a collection of three sculptures by Eduardo Chillida arranged as an architectural work by the Basque architect Luis...

Paseo de Eduardo Chillida, 20008 Donostia - San Sebastián, Spain (43.32169, -2.00555)

peinedelviento.info



C Amusement Park Monte Igueldo

This park sports a fantastic location atop the mountain towering over San Sebastian.

Igeldo pasealekua 183, 20008 Donostia / San Sebastián (43.32107, -2.00983)

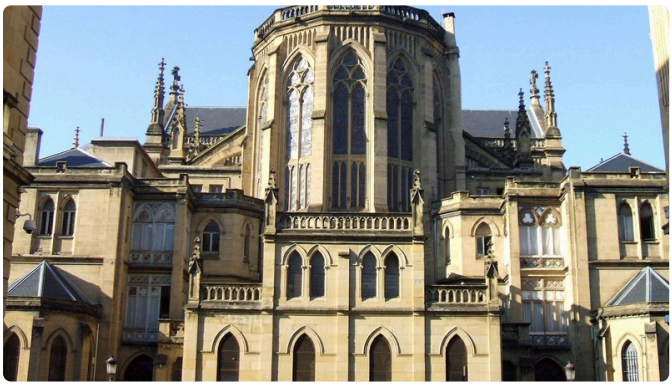
monteigueldo.es, +34 943 213 525



D Urgull Hill

Urgull is a hill by the ocean within the Basque city of San Sebastián, Gipuzkoa, Spain.

20003, Spain (43.32494, -1.98974)



E San Sebastián Cathedral

Majestic neo-Gothic cathedral embellished with Filippino shells and beautiful stained-glass windows. Landmark of the city.

Plaza del Buen Pastor, s/n, 20006 San Sebastián, Spain (43.31668, -1.98155)

elizagipuzkoa.org, +34 943 465 439



F San Sebastian City Hall

Housed in the former Grand Casino built in 1887, this Belle Époque landmark sits between La Concha Bay and the Old Town. The building served as a high-society gambling hub until 1924 before becoming the city's administrative center in 1947.

1 Calle de Ijentea, San Sebastián 20003, Spain (43.32151, -1.98577)

donostia.eus/taxo.nsf/fwHome



G Miramar Royal Palace

This picturesque palace has been used as a summer palace by the Royal family until 1930s. Worth stopping by if you're in the area.

Paseo de Miraconcha, 48, San Sebastian - Donostia, Spain (43.31444, -1.99791)

+34 943219022



H Basilica of Saint Mary of the Chorus

The Basilica of Saint Mary of Coro is a baroque Roman Catholic parish church and minor basilica completed in 1774.

Calle 31 de Agosto, 46, 20003 Donostia - San Sebastian, Spain (43.32396, -1.98672)

+34 943423124



I Plaza de la Constitucion

Located in the heart of the Old Town, this neoclassical square features distinctive numbered balconies—a remnant of its history as a bullring. Rebuilt in 1817 after a devastating fire, it now serves as the main venue for local festivals like the Tamborrada.

13 Plaza de la Constitución, San Sebastián 20003, Spain (43.32356, -1.98487)



J Kursaal Congress Centre

The Kursaal Congress Centre and Auditorium is a complex comprising several spaces: a great auditorium, many-use halls and exhibition halls.

Av de Zurriola, 1, 20002 San Sebastián, Spain (43.32446, -1.97912)

kursaal.eus, +34 943 00 30 00



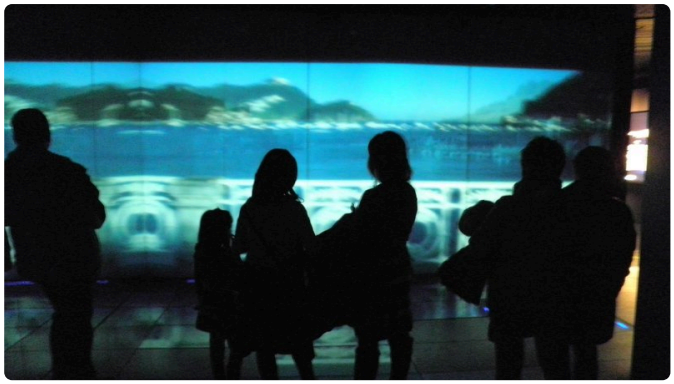
K San Telmo Museum

San Telmo Museoa is a museum of the Basque society located in Donostia-San Sebastián, addressing old and contemporary Basque culture, arts...

Zuloaga plaza, 20003 Donostia (43.32508, -1.98504)

Tu–Su	10:00–19:00

santelmomuseoa.eus, +34 943 481 580



L Aquarium San Sebastian

Medium-sized aquarium with a nice examples of the sea life and additional extensive exhibitions. Definitely worth the time.

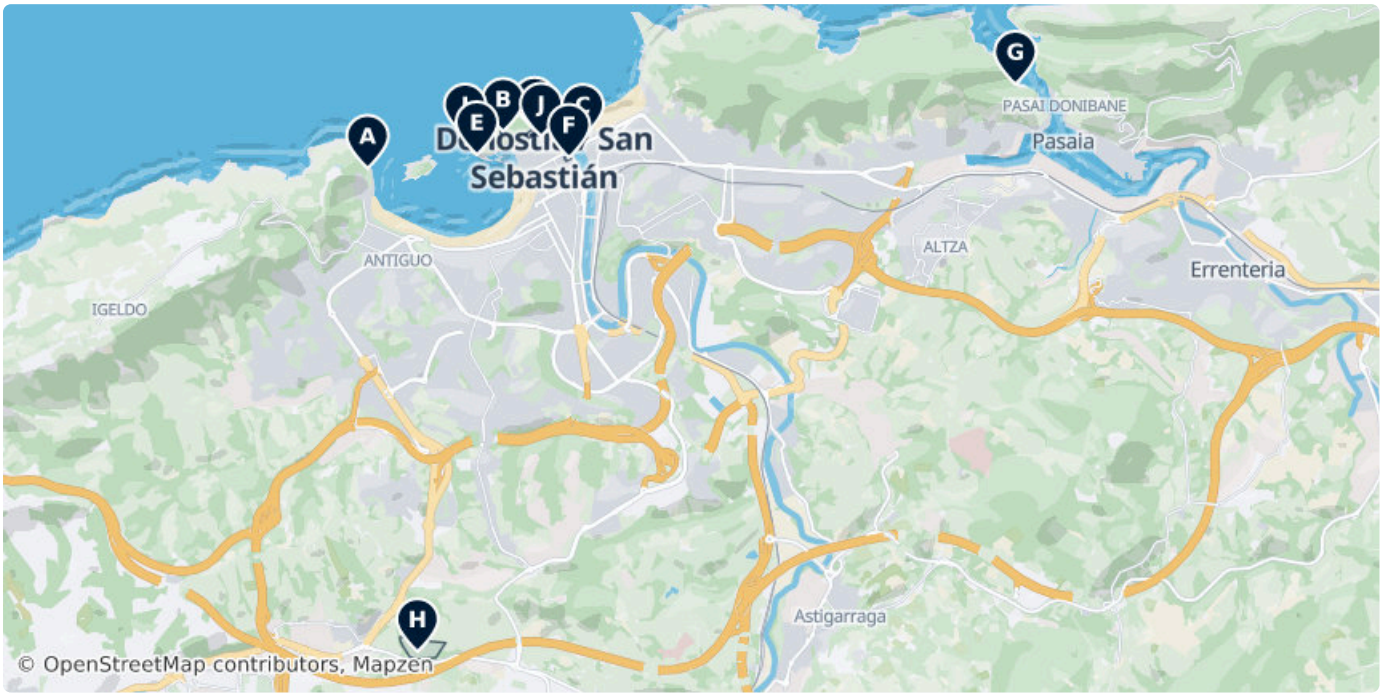
Carlos Blasco de Imaz plaza 1, 20008 Donostia / San Sebastián (43.32290, -1.99212)

Jan-Mar Tu–Fr	10:00–19:00
Jan-Mar Sa–Su	10:00–20:00
Apr-Jun Mo–Fr	10:00–19:00
Apr-Jun Sa–Su	10:00–20:00
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	10:00–20:00

aquariumss.com, +34 943 440 099

Editor's Choice

San Sebastián's cultural landscape is defined by its integration of avant-garde art and historical architecture. This selection features Eduardo Chillida's Comb of the Wind and Jorge Oteiza's Empty Construction, alongside the 12th-century Mota Castle on Mount Urgull. The city's maritime heritage is preserved at the Albaola shipyard, where a 16th-century whaling ship is being reconstructed, and the San Telmo Museum, housed in a former Dominican convent. Modernist landmarks like the Kursaal glass cubes and the Belle Époque Victoria Eugenia Theatre reflect the city's role as a hub for international arts and film.





Ⓐ Peine del Viento

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Paseo de Eduardo Chillida, 20008 Donostia - San Sebastián, Spain (43.32169, -2.00555)

peinedelviento.info



Ⓑ Mota Castle

12th-century fortress situated atop Mount Urgull. The site features defensive walls, cannons, and the History House museum, all overlooked by the 12-meter-tall Sacred Heart statue.

20003, Spain (43.32499, -1.98889)



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kursaal.eus, +34 943 00 30 00



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santelmomuseoa.eus, +34 943 481 580



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Jan-Mar Tu–Fr	10:00–19:00
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Apr-Jun Mo–Fr	10:00–19:00
Apr-Jun Sa–Su	10:00–20:00
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	10:00–20:00

aquariumss.com, +34 943 440 099



F Victoria Eugenia antzokia

Belle Époque theatre designed by Francisco de Urcola and opened in 1912. It serves as a primary venue for the San Sebastián International Film Festival and features a sandstone facade with Plateresque elements.

1, 20004 Donostia / San Sebastián (43.32266, -1.98080)



G Albaola Itsas Kultur Faktoria

Maritime museum and active shipyard in Pasaia focused on traditional Basque shipbuilding. It houses the live reconstruction of the San Juan, a 16th-century whaling galleon, using historical techniques.

Ondartxo Pasealekua, 20110, Spain (43.32921, -1.92594)

Tu	10:00–14:00
We–Sa	10:00–14:00, 15:00–18:00
Su	10:00–14:00

albaola.com, +34 943 392 426



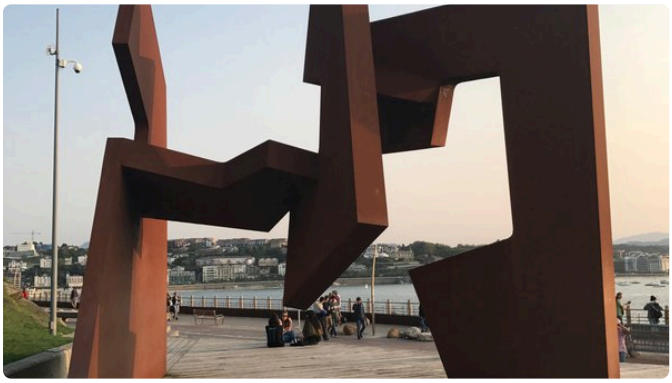
H Chillida-Leku Museum

Outstanding museum and a sculpture garden with the contemporary Basque art. Since 2011 opens only at certain dates, so check in advance.

Jauregi bailara 66 (43.27848, -1.99943)

Mo	10:00–18:00
Tu–We	Closed
Th–Su	10:00–18:00

museochillidaleku.com, +34 943 335 963



I Eraikuntza Hutsa-Construcción Vacía

Monumental steel sculpture by Jorge Oteiza located on Paseo Nuevo. This 1957 work explores the concept of empty space and serves as a landmark overlooking the Bay of Biscay.

Paseo Nuevo, 20003, Spain (43.32448, -1.99357)



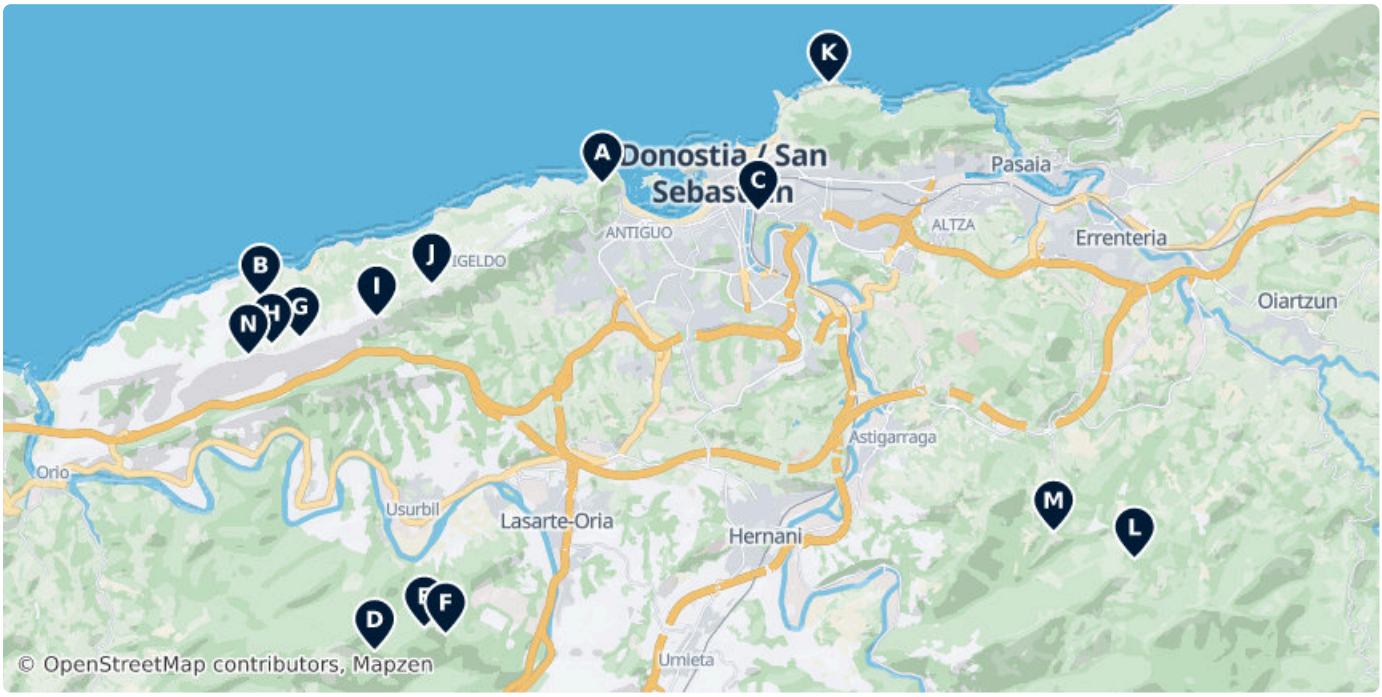
J Iglesia San Vicente

16th-century Gothic church, considered the oldest building in San Sebastián. It features a prominent altarpiece by Ambrosio de Bengoechea and remains a central landmark of the Old Town.

10 Calle 31 de Agosto, San Sebastián 20003, Spain (43.32456, -1.98422)

Hidden Gems

Explore the prehistoric landscape and coastal heights surrounding Donostia/San Sebastián. This collection highlights the region's megalithic heritage, featuring Bronze Age dolmens, Iron Age stone circles, and ancient burial mounds scattered across the Mendizorrotz and Igeldo massifs. Complementing these archaeological sites are panoramic viewpoints from the Tabakalera rooftop and Mount Igeldo, alongside the Paleolithic caves of Aizpitarte, which contain some of the oldest artistic expressions in the Basque Country.



A Igeldo Mendia

Panoramic summit overlooking La Concha Bay, accessible via a historic 1912 funicular. The peak features an early 20th-century amusement park and a lighthouse.

187 Paseo de Igeldo, 20008, Spain (43.32104, -2.00965)

B Mendizorrotz

Coastal peak offering expansive views of the Cantabrian Sea and the rugged shoreline stretching toward Orio.

(43.30346, -2.08276)

C Terraza Tabakalera

Public rooftop terrace on the fifth floor of the International Centre for Contemporary Culture, providing 360-degree views of the city and Egia district.

(43.31672, -1.97627)

D Dolmen Karramiolotz

Prehistoric stone tomb located in the mountain ranges surrounding the city, part of the local megalithic trail.

20170, Spain (43.24831, -2.05838)

E Dolmen Olaiko

Neolithic or Bronze Age funerary monument consisting of large upright stones capped by a horizontal slab.

20160, Spain (43.25192, -2.04769)

F Dolmen Arkutxa

Ancient megalithic burial chamber situated along the ridge of the Orio-Igeldo mountain station.

20160, Spain (43.25092, -2.04316)

G Mendizorrotz I harrespila

Iron Age stone circle, or cromlech, used for funerary rites, located on the slopes of Mount Mendizorrotz.

20008, Spain (43.29703, -2.07437)

H Cromlech Aitzazate I

Prehistoric circle of standing stones characteristic of the Pyrenean megalithic culture.

200 Paseo del Padre Orkolaga, 20008, Spain (43.29599, -2.08036)

I Arrobizar trikuharria

Prehistoric dolmen located in the heights of the Mendizorrotz massif, marking ancient territorial and burial sites.

120 Paseo del Padre Orkolaga, 20008, Spain (43.30025, -2.05792)

J Iturrieta trikuharria

Megalithic burial site featuring a stone chamber, part of the archaeological heritage of the Basque coast.

72 Paseo del Padre Orkolaga, 20008, Spain (43.30537, -2.04615)

K Ataloi

Coastal cave and natural lookout point located on the rugged cliffs of Mount Ulia.

20013, Spain (43.33660, -1.96118)

L Aizpitarteko leizea

System of caves containing significant Upper Paleolithic archaeological remains and rare cave engravings.

(43.26264, -1.89576)

M Cista Langagorri

Small prehistoric stone-lined burial box dating back to the Bronze Age.

(Unnamed Road), 20100, Spain (43.26687, -1.91306)

N Túmulo Tontortxiki I

Prehistoric earth and stone burial mound located on the ridge overlooking the coastline.

(Unnamed Road), 20170, Spain (43.29431, -2.08537)

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