

BASQUE COUNTRY

*culinary
immersion*

**A CULINARY & CULTURAL ADVENTURE
IN NORTHERN SPAIN**

Hosted by The Chopping Block + Onward Travel
SEPTEMBER 30—OCTOBER 7, 2024

The
**Chopping
Block**

ONWARD TRAVEL ✈️
EST 2014



Chopping Block collaborator, Chef Guillermo Delavault, and Onward Travel invite you to join a small group culinary tour to The Basque Country! This weeklong program is an opportunity for culinary and cultural immersion in one of the most fascinating food enthusiast destinations on the planet.

The Basque Country is a fiercely independent region with hundreds of miles of coastline along the Bay of Biscay. The Euskaldunak people are characterized by their own language and culture, and a society built around the appreciation of food and wine.

To spend a week exploring Basque Country from end to end – from Spain to France, effervescent Txakoli wine to Rioja's reds, pintxos to tasting menus, farmhouse tables to farmers markets, Idiazabal cheese to chocolat, sea views to cobbled streets – is to immerse yourself in one of the world's most enchanting culinary destinations.

Our home base for the week will be San Sebastián, a small city formed around a horseshoe-shaped beach where life revolves around food and dining. It's an invigorating locale with gorgeous outdoors, world-class urban beaches, art, music and restaurants galore, plus nearby wine, cider, and artisan food producers. At night, San Sebastián is alive with Donostiarra (residents of San Sebastián) strolling from bar to bar enjoying pintxos (Basque-style tapas), and six days a week the local food market is bustling. There is much to discover.

Chef Guillermo has been visiting San Sebastián for twenty years and considers it a second home. He is delighted to share this special place with our group and will be partnering with a Basque colleague, Chef Lander, to introduce you to the local food culture. The Basque Country is a feast for the senses and we invite you to indulge!



Imagine yourself...

Strolling along La Concha Beach at the end of a beautifully day

Enjoying lunch al fresco on a farm in the French Basque region

Eating pintxos (Basque-style tapas) in the old town...home to the largest concentration of bars in all of Europe

Welcome to Euskadi!

DAY 1: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 30

- Lunch on hard cider and steak at a traditional cider house
- Check in at a sleek boutique hotel in the heart of San Sebastián

Welcome! We'll meet at the Bilbao Airport late morning and hop on a private minibus en route for San Sebastián. But first, we'll stave off jet lag with hard cider and an authentic dining experience. Just outside San Sebastián, let's stop at a traditional cider house to enjoy our first feast. Sagardotegias (cider houses) are nestled in the hills around San Sebastián. Enjoy unlimited cider this afternoon, poured (spurred, really) directly from the barrels: the perfect complement to a traditional lunch featuring chorizo cooked in cider, salt-cod omelet, and char-grilled T-bone steaks.

After an experience so very very Basque we're headed to that jewel of a seaside city, San Sebastián, or Donostia in the local language Euskara. Speaking of words in Euskara, our hotel is called Hotel Arbaso, which means "Ancestor." The hotel is now run by the family's third generation, and when it was last passed down its newest stewards gave the property a total facelift and a new name, to honor those who had paved their way. Today the hotel has a clean and sleek look, almost minimalist, which typifies modern Spanish interior design. Still, attention was paid to cosiness and comfort and you'll find that breakfast each morning is a real treat.

Our welcome dinner tonight is just downstairs at Narru, the fine dining restaurant with its home in Hotel Arbaso. A destination in its own right, Narru is helmed by Chef Iñigo Peña and the beautiful plates from his market-driven menu of traditional Basque dishes prepared with a modern twist will surely leave you ready for the week of culinary exploration that lies ahead.

Meals Lunch, Dinner

Exploring San Sebastián

DAY 2: TUESDAY OCTOBER 1

- Immerse yourself in local culture: from history to pintxos
- Enjoy a one-of-a-kind cheese tasting, an "urban picnic" if you will

Enjoy a leisurely buffet breakfast at the hotel and perhaps a morning beach walk. Late morning we'll meet a local guide to discover the city of San Sebastián. We'll get the lay of the land and learn about the interesting history of this unique and fiercely independent place.

Midday you're on your own for lunch and a short wander...then we'll reconvene for a super fun cheese party. Our friends at the best little cheese shop in town will have a whole spread set up for us on the leafy street in front of their store, and they'll be pouring some interesting wines for us as they guide us through a tasting of iconic local cheeses. It's an urban picnic of sorts, and only our group gets the invite!

Tonight, we'll split up into two groups. One group will enjoy a free evening and the other will set out to discover the unique pintxos (Basque tapas) culture of the Old Town. The pintxos bars are mostly self-serve, stand up, social experiences. Little glasses of txakoli wine and local cider are poured from on high, patrons are elbow to elbow and the vibe is convivial to say the least. Sometimes it seems each bar is trying to outdo the next and the tapas is considered the best in Europe. It's haute cuisine in miniature, and we'll enjoy it bite by bite, led by Chef Guillermo who will take us to some of his favorite places.

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

MEET YOUR CHEF HOST



GUILLERMO DELAVAUT

Guillermo studied Culinary Arts in Barcelona, and developed his professional career in some of the most relevant hotels and restaurants of that city. He first visited San Sebastián in 2002 and immediately fell in love with the place. Almost every year, for ten years, he went back to Donostia to see friends, eat the best food of the Iberic Peninsula, and drink txakolí, of course.

In 2012 Guillermo accepted the position of Executive Sous Chef at Hotel Maria Cristina, a prestigious hotel in San Sebastián, and the dream of working and living in the Basque Country came true. Guillermo moved to Chicago in 2016, and started his adventure as a Chef Instructor at The Chopping Block. Currently he lives in Portland, Maine, where he still collaborates with The Chopping Block, and is currently the Culinary Director at Fore Street restaurant, the most emblematic establishment of the city.

A Day by the Sea

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 2

- Snap photos of picturesque fishing villages on the Bay of Pasaia
- Taste simply prepared, fresh as can be seafood at a local tavern

Today we're exploring Pasaia, a collection of fishing villages just east of San Sebastián, set amid an absolutely gorgeous natural environment where two mountain ranges flank the Bay of Pasaia. Those who are up for it will set out earlier to hike the coastal trail between San Sebastián and Pasaia San Pedro. The hike is about five miles, and slightly challenging, with absolutely gorgeous views of the sea and it's part of the famous Camino de Santiago trail.

Those who prefer to sleep in will get a ride to Pasaia and the whole group will meet at Albaola Itsas Kultur Faktoria. This is a fascinating way to experience the history of this region as you can actually see the reconstruction of a 16th century whaling boat which is being painstakingly undertaken in a method purely authentic to the period. People who are interested in learning about this tradition travel from all over the world to apprentice here, and it's a unique and beautiful place to experience.

After Albaola we'll head to a casual local tavern where super fresh fish is served fried or in sandwiches without pretension in an old fisherman's house. Paired with a crisp, cold beer - nothing is better! Then we'll take a little more time to explore this atmospheric place before heading back to the city. Tonight, the group who didn't go out for pintxos the night before will hit the town in search of tasty bites and good times with Guillermo!

Meals Breakfast, Lunch



Art, Wine & Fine Dining

DAY 4: THURSDAY OCTOBER 3

- Look out over the vineyard to the sea beyond, glass in hand
- Savor what may be the best grilled fish you've ever had

Nearby San Sebastián is the heart of the Getariako Txakolina D.O. Txakolina wine is made from the indigenous grapes Hondarribi Zuri (white) and Hondarribi Beltza (red). The wine has a natural spritz and is typically poured from high above, so it foams in the glasses and aerates. We'll visit a family-owned winery and toast our adventures to come while gazing out over the vineyards towards the sea.

Then it is time for lunch at Elkano. This Michelin-starred restaurant is known for creative, elegantly plated cuisine featuring seafood and fish. The restaurant started as a humble grill but is now the most prestigious fish grill in the Basque region. In 2021, Elkano was named to the "World's Top 50" restaurant list and this is a true dining experience, a must-visit for chefs when they pass through the region. We'll enjoy a marvelous, memorable tasting menu which culminates in their famous grilled turbot and of course, we'll take the wine pairings as well.

From Elkano we head back to San Sebastián with a stop on the way for some leg stretching at Chillida Leku, the outdoor museum dedicated to the work of influential Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida, and created by the artist within his own lifetime. His monumental works are in complete synchronicity with their gorgeous natural surroundings of trees and meadow and it's just the place to marvel at the beauty of life on a fine afternoon after an incredible lunch.

We get back to the hotel in the late afternoon and the rest of the evening is yours to enjoy as you like - pintxos anyone!?

Meals Breakfast, Lunch



Merveilleux French Basque

DAY 5: FRIDAY OCTOBER 4

- Sample regional specialties including Piment d'Espelette
- Spend the evening enjoying a creative Michelin-star tasting menu

Let's go to France! Today we will drive to the Pays Basque. We'll explore the French coastline along the way, stopping in small villages for chocolate, macarons, and irresistible photo ops. We'll visit charming French towns with colorful facades and quirky Basque architecture like St-Jean-de-Luz, a small Atlantic fishing village. You'll have time to visit St-Jean-de-Luz's charming market.

Midday, we'll visit Espelette, famous for the pepper of the same name. The Espelette pepper, also known as Piment d'Espelette, is a chili pepper regarded as DOP product meaning its growing is protected and limited to the French commune of Espelette, Pyrénées-Atlantiques. We'll visit Atelier du Piment to visit the farm and learn about the process of growing and processing the peppers. Then, at a table set al fresco besides the pepper fields, taste a selection of local products and enjoy a light lunch al fresco of local delicacies including Basque Talo (similar to tortilla), local meats, and a cream cake typical of Pays Basque.

Tonight we're headed to Kokotxa, an amazing Michelin-starred restaurant in the heart of San Sebastian with a young team who's creativity is reflected in every dish. Our group will spend a special evening over their 11-course tasting menu, delighting in the presentation and the flavors alike.

Meals Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

From Market to Kitchen

DAY 6: SATURDAY OCTOBER 5

- Tour the fantastic fresh food market with a chef's guidance
- Have fun in the kitchen as you help to cook local recipes

It's our last day in San Sebastian. This morning we head to the vibrant city market to explore local products (wait until you see the fresh fish!) and purchase ingredients to make our lunch. Then we are headed into the kitchen to prepare Basque specialties together, think dishes such as clams and rice or hake with pil pil sauce, before sitting down to a delicious meal together. The rest of the day and evening is yours to enjoy the good life in San Sebastian as you wish, maybe you'd like to add another Michelin star to your collection or... more pintxos!

Meals Breakfast, Lunch

Day Trip to Rioja

DAY 7: SUNDAY OCTOBER 6

- Taste a range of Rioja wines produced by family-run wineries
- Experience one last gourmet feast together, Bilbao specialties!

Enjoy your last breakfast at Hotel Arbaso. We're spending today in an iconic European wine region: Rioja. The Rioja D.O.C. is Spain's largest wine region with more than 500 wineries in the area. The region dates from the Neolithic area and is home to atmospheric hilltop fortress towns with medieval walls and Gothic churches. Savor the world-class wines and unforgettable views.

In Rioja today we'll visit two family-run wineries with very different vibes, one in the bucolic countryside and one in the heart of the ancient village of Laguardia with a network of subterranean wine vaults. In between winery visits we'll have a delicious country-style lunch at a restaurant popular with local folks from all walks of life.

From Rioja we are headed back to Bilbao. Check in at the sleek and stylish Hotel Tayko in the heart of the city. We have one more wonderful dinner tonight, just up the street at Los Fueros. The restaurant is well known as an institution for fresh, well done Bilbao-style dishes and we'll toast one last time to a delicious and fun week together here in the unforgettable Basque Country!

Meals Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Farewell

DAY 8: MONDAY OCTOBER 7

- Head home with wonderful memories

From the Hotel Tayko Bilbao, you are 20 minutes from the Bilbao International Airport. The hotel will arrange taxis to the airport for travelers. Or perhaps you want to add an extra night or two to experience Bilbao and visit the world famous Guggenheim Museum - in that case, let Onward Travel know and we'll be happy to extend your hotel stay. Safe travels!

Meals Breakfast

TRIP INFORMATION

Basque Country Culinary Immersion September 30–October 7, 2024

BEGINS	Bilbao International Airport (BIL), on September 30 Airport transfer provided late morning, arrival to Bilbao by 11:00 am is preferred. <i>Travelers may like to come a day early based on available flight schedules. Onward can assist with early travel arrangements.</i>
ENDS	Hotel Tayko Bilbao, on October 7 No activities are scheduled for today.
SUITABILITY & MOBILITY	This tour includes walking for up to 20 minutes at a time, plus stairs, uneven natural terrain and cobblestones. Travelers should be able to walk a mile at a comfortable pace. If you have limited mobility, we may be able to accommodate you, but it is essential to inform us at the time of registration. Travelers may always opt out of activities they deem too physically challenging but refunds will not be provided.
TRIP LENGTH	8 days, 7 nights
LODGING	Hotel Arbaso, San Sebastián 6 Nights A four-star family-run property located in the heart of San Sebastián. Recently remodeled with a sleek and clean vibe, a lauded restaurant downstairs, and the city at your doorstep. Hotel Tayko Bilbao 1 Night An upscale, contemporary hotel on the edge of Bilbao's Old Town with a bar & eatery.
TOUR DATES & PRICE	September 30–October 7, 2024 Double Occupancy \$5450 per traveler Single Supplement \$1075 additional Please note that air travel is not included and a current passport is required for travel to Spain. <u>Please ensure that your passport is valid 6 months after the date of travel.</u> <i>You are welcome to pay your trip fee by credit card, please note that a 3% processing fee will be applied.</i>

AIR TRAVEL

The tour will start and end at Bilbao International Airport (BIO), the air hub for the Basque Country. Please confirm with Onward Travel that the tour is a "go" before booking non-refundable airfare. Contact Onward Travel if you'd like assistance.

Trip price includes the following:

- Arrival airport transfer and ground transportation in Spain.
- Seven nights accommodations.
- Most meals: daily breakfasts, six lunches, and four dinners. We have fantastic gourmet experiences planned, with wine included, of course!
- Onward Travel tour director at your service plus excellent local tour guides and Chef Guillermo hosting.
- Hands-on cooking class.
- Activities, tastings, admission fees, and tours as detailed in the itinerary.
- Taxes and gratuities.
-

Register now!

Visit onwardtravel.co to complete the registration form and submit payment.

Space is limited to only 14 travelers. \$1,500 deposit due upon booking, balance due by June 1, 2024.



**The Onward
Travel Tour
Director
for this
trip is
Andrea**

For over two decades, **Andrea Miller** has been inspiring home cooks to explore the art of cooking with The Chopping Block, Chicago's renowned recreational cooking school.

In her free time, Andrea enjoys gardening, reading, keeping fit, stand up paddleboarding and spending time with her dog, Boz.

With her infectious enthusiasm, dedication to detail and vast culinary experiences, Andrea is thrilled to unlock the essence of Basque cuisine, wine, and culture with you.

Please take note of the following useful information, and view more at www.onwardtravel.co/letsgo



Once Onward Travel receives your registration form, we will send you an **invoice** with instructions to pay the **deposit**.



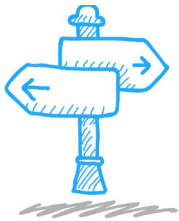
If you'd like to purchase **trip insurance**, we suggest Travelex. For more info, call them at 800-228-9792 or visit www.travelex.com and refer to location number 32-0704.



Four to six weeks before the tour **we will mail you a packet** with a packing list, traveler directory and other useful info.



Make sure you know where your **passport** is now! For travel to Spain it should be valid for six months beyond your return date.



Onward Travel's cancellation policy in a nutshell:

- \$250 of your initial deposit is nonrefundable
- Cancel within 90 days and the full deposit is nonrefundable
- Cancel within 60 days and 50% of total trip fee is nonrefundable
- Cancel within 30 days and the full trip fee is nonrefundable

See the full *Terms & Conditions* at www.onwardtravel.co/terms



Get in Touch!

Contact Onward Travel with questions or special requests:
letsgo@onwardtravel.co
845-293-2729

