

Mediaeval Trail





Fancy a journey back in time?

Hop into the car and get ready to discover the most authentic side of Uribe. We suggest a cultural trail to take you to six unique spots where history comes to life: defensive towers, aristocratic palaces and castles that preserve all the mediaeval essence of our area. In each of them you'll find a little story to help you to understand what life was like in the Middle Ages.

Along the way you can enjoy landscapes, natural settings and heritage, with stops to stroll about, take photographs and let yourself be amazed.

A perfect experience for anyone looking to get off the beaten track and find some peace and quiet in Uribe.





Click here to download the route GPX file

Mediaeval Trail



Plentzia

Standing at the mouth of the Butrón estuary, Plentzia is one of the most distinctive mediaeval towns on the Bizkaia coast. Founded in 1299 by Diego López de Haro, Lord of Bizkaia, from the start it had a strategic purpose: to control maritime traffic, protect the natural harbour and boost commerce in the Bay of Biscay. Our route begins in the main town square.



Find out
more

Did you know...?

IT WAS ONCE OPEN TO THE SEA

The Middle Ages were a time of busy trade, not just on land but across the Bay of Biscay. The excellent timber of Bizkaia province supplied the local shipyards, where the typical craft of the day were built.

Sailing, trade and whaling, from which oil was obtained for lighting, were an essential part of the economy. The ships built here included galleys, heirs to the ancient Roman triremes, and sailing ships designed to cope with the rough Bay of Biscay. At the end of this period the famous caravel emerged, the prelude to the great oceanic expeditions.

Charts and navigational instruments bear witness to the seafaring skills of those centuries.





The castle of Butrón

Standing in the Gatika valley, this originated in the 15th century as a feudal stronghold built by the Butrón family for defensive purposes and to control the territory during the conflicts between different bands. This stone-built fortification acted for centuries as an aristocratic bastion and symbol of local power.

After being abandoned for a long time, in the 19th century the castle was restored in the 'historicist' style by the Marqués de Cubas. He embellished the ancient structure with towers, neo-Gothic windows and other decorative features to recreate an idealised mediaeval castle. The work, completed around 1878, mixed neo-Gothic and neo-Renaissance features to create today's fairy-tale castle, unique in the Basque Country.



Did you know...?

MEDIAEVAL CLOTHING

Few things say more about human beings than their taste for dressing up. In the Middle Ages clothing shifted towards flirtatiousness, introducing major inventions like the button and a wide variety of adornments. Outfits for fighting and for bed can also be seen through this prism, revealing the old conflict between dressing up and morality; touching a woman's uncovered hand could incur a fine of 15 sols.





Torre Martiartu

Standing high up in the Udondo valley near Erandio, this tower dating back to the *banderiza* feuds between the late 14th and early 15th centuries was built as the home of the Martiartu family, who controlled the region in the Middle Ages.

Over time it was attacked and damaged, for example in 1472, but was rebuilt and adapted, changing from a fortress to a country house and later a farmhouse, though keeping features like thick walls and window seats. Alongside the 17th-century chapel of San Antonio, it is important testimony to the mediaeval history of the Uribe area.



Find out more
about...

WAR AND PEACE

The later Middle Ages in Bizkaia province were marked by the so-called *banderiza* wars, feuds in which the different noble houses were grouped beneath the *oñacino* standard of the house of Butrón and the *gamboinos* of the house of Mújica.

This full-scale civil conflict lasted until the 15th century, and its turbulent history, at time descending into bloody fighting between towns and bands over conflicts like "who hunted a boar" are described in this visitor centre, where you can also find out all about the fortified manor houses and castles of Bizkaia province.





Zamudiotorre

In the locality of Arteaga, beside the church of San Martín, is a stone-built mediaeval tower associated with the Zamudio family, and the symbol of their power in the later Middle Ages. On an almost square floor plan, it stands out for its thick walls, its hipped roof and defensive features like the fortified courtyard and the windows with their stone benches.

Today, the main floor houses an exhibition of models depicting the Mediaeval Trail itself, well worth a visit. This makes the tower a key place to find out about the life and the defensive systems of the aristocratic Basque families in the Middle Ages.



Did you know...?

MEDIAEVAL FOOD

Religion, at the core of everyday life at that time, had a great influence on diet. Lent, fasting and fat-free Wednesday, Friday and Saturday tested the culinary creativity of these inhabitants of Bizkaia province. Who also had bread, milk, eggs, meat, fish, pulses, vegetables, spices, wine, beer and mead, though not of course distributed equally between nobility, burghers and ordinary people - bread made up 70% of the daily nutrition of the latter group. This is the beginning of our famous cuisine.





Palacio Anguleri

In Larrabetzu, this is a 17th-century building renovated in 1777, combining the traditional Basque farmstead with the character of a manor house. It stands out for its mixture of materials - brick and different kinds of stonework - and for its frontage with a gallery of Tuscan columns and decorative wall paintings.

At the back, a stairway leads up to the main floor, emblazoned with the crest of the Meabe family. Completed with an annex, the palace is in an eclectic architectural style combining the rural and the aristocratic in a natural setting.

You can round off your visit with a walk around the town of Larrabetzu and a visit to the "oath church" of San Emeterio and San Celedonio in Goikoelexalde, a place of considerable historical and symbolic importance.



Did you know...?

ROYAL AND HOLY ROUTES

Naturally, one of the routes of the Camino de Santiago runs through Bizkaia province, where the inhabitants took to heart the severe admonition in the *Codex Calistinus*: "In years gone by there were many who incurred the wrath of God by refusing to welcome the poor and pilgrims of Santiago (...)." You can find out about its history at this visitor centre, along with many other things that are crucial to understanding the idiosyncrasies of the Bizkaia region. The *Ruta Juradera* or Oath Route, taken by the kings of Castile in their capacity as Lords of Bizkaia, through Bilbao, Goikoelexalde, Gernika and Bermeo, swearing to uphold the privileges, practices and customs enjoyed by the region's inhabitants, can also be followed on this trail.





Torrebillela

Located in Mungia, this is a 14th-century mediaeval fortified house built by the Villela family on a strategic spot with a defensive function. Originally wooden, it was rebuilt in stone some time before 1525, keeping part of its original structure.

In 1852 it was heavily rebuilt, incorporating neo-Gothic and neo-Renaissance features and adding a palace built around much of it. After being abandoned, it was rebuilt in the 20th century and today acts as a cultural centre, in an example of eclectic Basque architecture.



Did you know...?

REGIONAL ORGANISATION IN BIZKAIA

The typical self-sufficient Basque farmsteads grew up around parish churches, leading to a feeling of community that in time developed in the *anteiglesia*.

Another model of settlement was known as the *villa*, established through a charter granted by the Lord of Bizkaia as a place for markets and defence.

Both *villas* and *anteiglesias* were represented in the *Juntas Generales*, the Bizkaia provincial assembly that was in fact a mediaeval parliament, and which still exists here today.

For centuries, both these models coexisted in some places, as in Mungia, where the *villa* and the *anteiglesia* were separate until their merger in the year 1900.





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BASQUE COUNTRY

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GOBIERNO VASCO

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