

The decalogue of the responsible tourist

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Legendary mountain passes

Climbing mountain passes in the Basque Country means feeling that change in the vegetation from the Cantabrian to the Mediterranean drainage basin, the smell of grass when crossing from one valley to another, exchanging greetings ("aupa!") when other cyclists pass by...

Mountain Pass	Distance	Average gradient
1 ORDUÑA	8km	7.5%
2 HERRERA	5.6km	8.3%
3 ARRATE	6.4km	7%
4 JAIZKIBEL	9.8km	4.5%
5 URKIOLA	6km	9.2%
6 OIZ	5.2km	11%

The Basque Route

- Routes from BILBAO
- Routes from VITORIA-GASTEIZ
- Routes from DONOSTIA/SAN SEBASTIÁN
- Routes from EIBAR

Gastronomy

If you're cycling, you'll have to replenish your energy at some point, and where better than in the Basque Country with its famous gastronomy.

Virgin of Dorleta

A stop to pay respects to the Patron Saint

On 8 August 1960, pursuing the idea of their predecessors who had formed a committee a couple of years earlier to declare the Virgin of Dorleta the Patron Saint of Cyclists, the young long-distance cyclists from Bilbao, Luis and Ángel Serrano, together with José Luis Sáenz de Olazagoitia from Vitoria-Gasteiz, cycled to Rome. There they were received by Pope John XXIII, known as the Good Pope, who was a great cycling enthusiast and, needless to say, a fan of Gino Bartali. They carried the request for the canonical declaration of the Virgin of Dorleta as the Patron Saint of Spanish Cyclists in their panniers. She was thus proclaimed on the 28th of the same month.

Regularly visited by cyclists all year round, this is an essential stop to pay respects to the Patron Saint located next to the road at the highest point of the Arlaban mountain pass. Don't miss visiting the Sanctuary devoted to her in the neighbouring town of Leintz Gatzaga. It is full of all kinds of offerings from professional cyclists, long-distance cyclists and different clubs from every corner of the country

Cycle safely

Helmet

Always wear a helmet. Always wear it and fasten it properly.

Lights

Fit a red lamp to the seat post to show you are there.

Water and food

Always carry water and some food for your journey.

Clothes

Wear suitable clothes, bright colours and reflective elements.

Insurance

Purchase accident insurance from your travel agency.

Emergencies

In case of accident or emergency, call 112.

1 Bilbao → Lekeitio

In this first stage of the Basque Route we have a date with water. You'll find it next to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, you'll follow it until you reach a transporter bridge which is unique in the world, and you won't lose sight of it all day. You'll see it lapping on beaches, dancing around islands, crashing into wild cliffs, surrounding fishing villages and outlining impossible rivers such as the one at Urdaibai. Welcome to the Bizkaia of the Cantabrian Sea.

113km
Climb **1.809m**

2 Lekeitio → Zarautz

Ready to flirt with the green Basque Country? The mountainous Basque Country, the Basque Country hidden in the folds of the valleys, the Basque Country of lonely farmsteads. Let's go. First, you'll see the dawn over the Cantabrian sea, you're sure to have lunch in a valley, that of the Urola river, hidden between mountains and, finally, you'll have dinner near a hill shaped like a mouse.

81km
Climb **1.281m**

3 Zarautz → Donostia/San Sebastián

You're in Gipuzkoa. You'll know it because of the smell of fresh fish cooking on charcoal grills, the traces left by the Romans 2000 years ago, a town whose pintxos caused the New York Times to fall in love and another town that looks like Venice enclosed by a fjord which we'll reach by means of Jaizkibel. Yes, you're in Gipuzkoa, home of La Concha, the beach that takes everyone's breath away.

83km
Climb **1.358m**

4 Donostia/San Sebastián → Vitoria-Gasteiz

In the Basque Country, "gero arte" means "see you later". Therefore, say "gero arte" to the sea because you're heading to the inland Basque Country, that of the meadows and beech forests, that of cider houses and raised glasses. Once you've conquered the tough slope leading to Leintz Gatzaga, the last village in Gipuzkoa before entering Araba, the route presents no problems and reaches the finishing line in Vitoria-Gasteiz, the green city.

130km
Climb **1.641m**

5 Vitoria-Gasteiz → Laguardia

There is a Basque Country far from the clichéd view, and today you'll get to know it. Are you ready to ride through wide cereal fields? Ready to discover a dolmen among sunflowers? And, are you ready to jump into a sea of vineyards? A walled town awaits you, as do wine tastings in underground wineries and the most surprising architecture in our land.

105km
Climb **1.440m**

6 Laguardia → Orduña

It is not easy to leave Rioja Alavesa, not at all. To alleviate its memory, we'll cross the legendary Herrera mountain pass from which you'll enjoy a surprising panoramic view of the Ebro valley, discover a salty landscape and a couple of waterfalls to take your hat off to. You'll also see the source of a river that you first saw a few days ago: the Nervión, which meanders through the centre of Bilbao on its way to the sea.

141km
Climb **1.706m**

7 Orduña → Bilbao

'El Botxo' awaits you, but beforehand you'll visit a little-known corner of Bizkaia, Encartaciones (or Enkarterri), and also a deep valley that leaves its mark, that of Karrantza. You'll see the sea again and yes, you'll finally be able to sing "From Santurtze to Bilbao..." because today you're going to experience it for real. Just like that. All along the river bank. Showing off your calves? Who knows...

93km
Climb **1.194m**

8 Lekeitio → Vitoria-Gasteiz

On today's menu: magic Euskadi. In this stage, which serves as a link for those who don't have many days available, we'll leave the rugged coast of Bizkaia and head for the capital city of the Basque Country: Vitoria-Gasteiz. This will give us the chance to discover a land full of contrasts. The mythical Urkiola mountain pass awaits us between stone colossi before reaching that wonderful inland sea, among cereal fields and legendary enclaves.

103km
Climb **1.486m**

Design: EPS Comunicación

tourism.euskadi.eus/en/

Euskadi, auzolana, bien común

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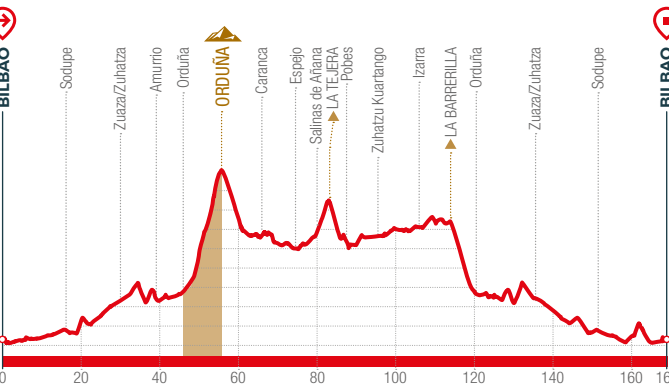
Bi1 Bilbao

Orduña circuit

We head inland in Bizkaia, in search of the historical municipality of Orduña, the only municipality in the province with the title of city, where we find the beginning of the mountain pass of the same name, whose highest point is in Castile.



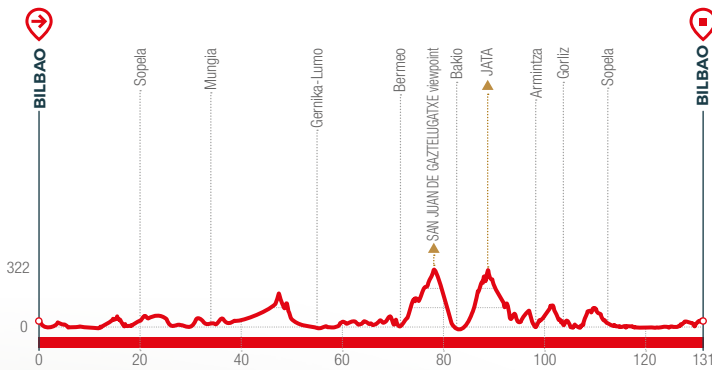
169 km
Climb 2.083m



Bi2 Bilbao

San Juan de Gaztelugatxe

Travelling along the Basque Coast is a dream come true if you follow this route which covers a large part of the coast of Bizkaia. In the distance, San Juan de Gaztelugatxe witnesses our journey among the "leg-breaking" climbs and descents.



131 km
Climb 1.566m



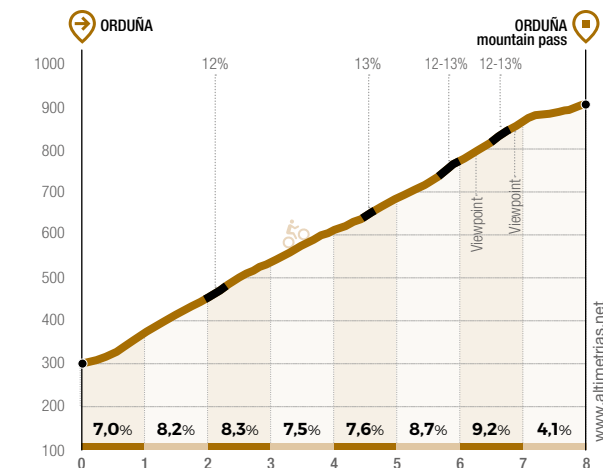
Legendary mountain passes

Orduña 1

8 km

Climb 606m
Altitude 902m
Average Gradient 7.5%
Coefficient 145

Located on the border between Bizkaia and Burgos, the Orduña mountain pass, together with Urkiola and Herrera, is one of "the three big ones". It is worth highlighting the three times this climb has been featured in the Tour of Spain cycling race, with a decisive role in the earliest editions, when the tour usually finished in the Basque Country.

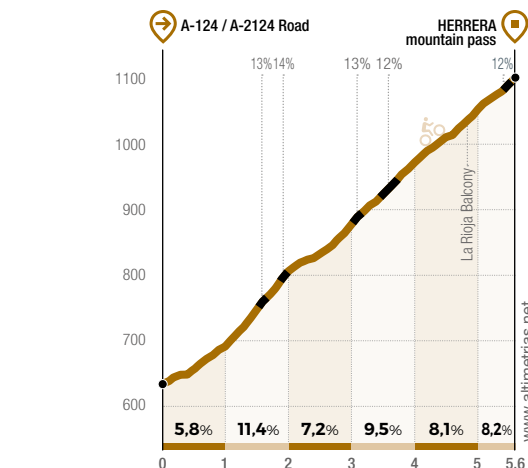


Herrera 2

5.6 km

Climb 469m
Altitude 1.101m
Average Gradient 7%
Coefficient 128

Tackling this mountain pass located completely within the province of Araba is quite a challenge. Its final stretch with a gradient of 14% is no joke. At just 1km from the summit, a small fork on the left-hand side of the road leads to the La Rioja panoramic viewpoint, which is a must-visit.



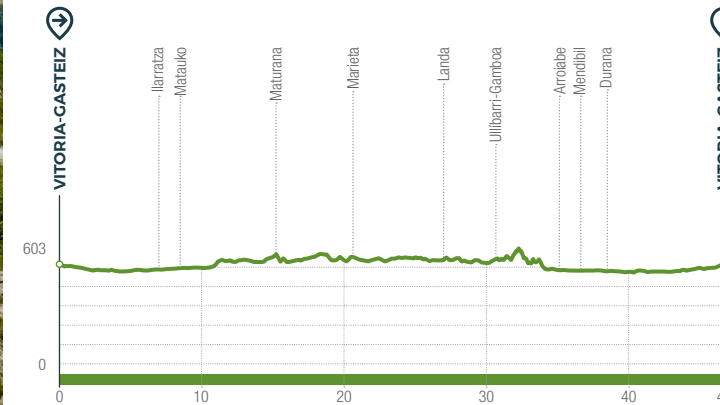
VG1 Vitoria-Gasteiz

Ullibarri-Gamboa reservoir circuit

Having hardly any difficulties, the Ullibarri-Gamboa reservoir circuit is perhaps one of the busiest cycling environments, where one can often find oneself alongside professional cyclists as they train.



47 km
Climb 176m



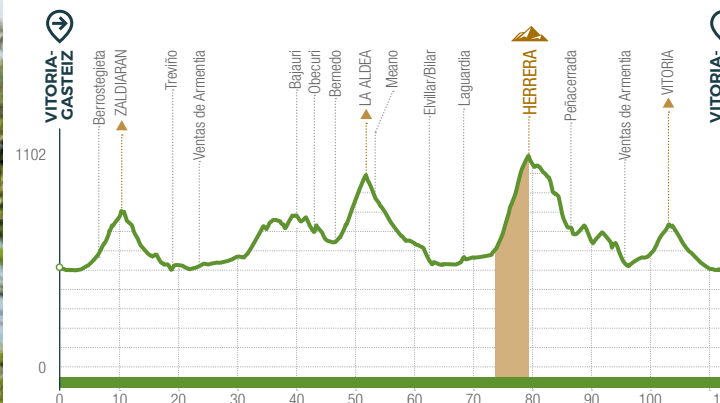
VG2 Vitoria-Gasteiz

Herrera circuit

Roads with hardly any traffic, in a flat natural environment full of contrasts. We will exchange the green woodlands of the Cantabrian drainage basin for the ochre vineyards of Rioja Alavesa on the Mediterranean drainage basin, from where we will climb to the panoramic Herrera mountain pass.



112 km
Climb 1.935m



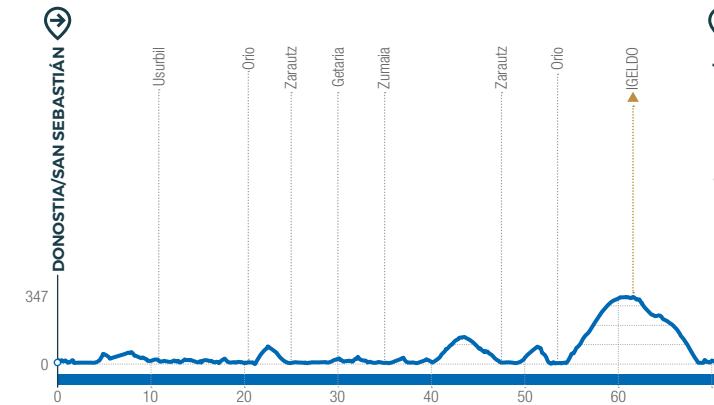
DSS1 Donostia/San Sebastián

The Mouse of Getaria circuit

Don't miss this circuit if you're in Donostia-San Sebastián. The Gipuzkoan stretch of the Basque Coast awaits us, with its "mouse" seeming to turn its back on us as we pass through Getaria. Leg-breaking terrain with a few climbs, such as that of Igeldo, that will require us to use those much-feared lowest gears.



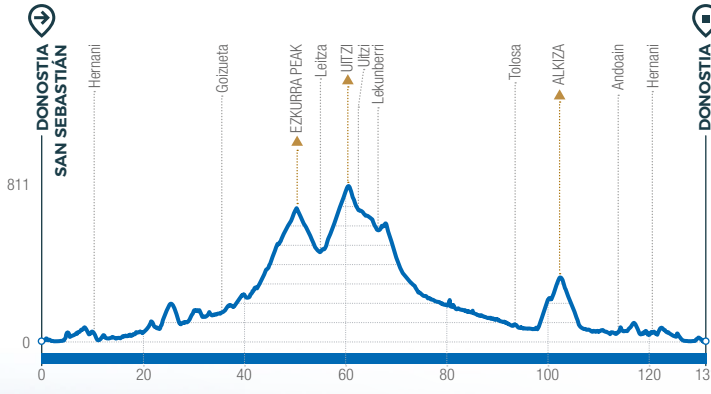
71 km
Climb 852m



DSS2 Donostia/San Sebastián

Gipuzkoa and Navarre border

This Gipuzkoa inland proposal takes us to the border with Navarre where the magnificence of the forest and vegetation will come as a surprise to more than one cyclist. Once past the town of Hernani, the roads are sparsely populated, which makes them all the more enjoyable.



131 km
Climb 1.871m



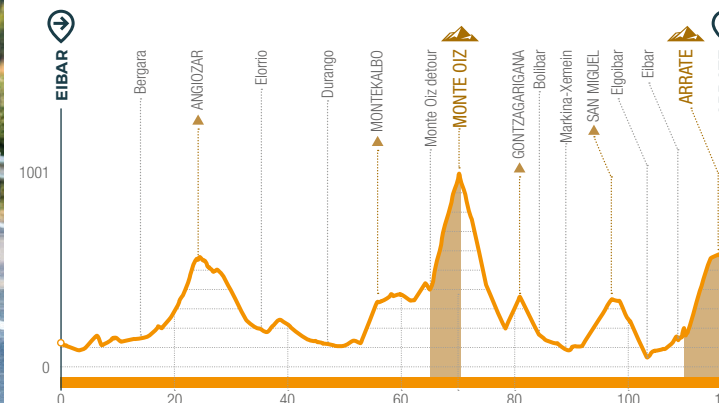
E1 Eibar

The Arrate climb

To speak about Eibar, known as the armaments town, is to speak about bicycle manufacturing, about Bicicleta Eibarresa, about the Itzulia, about the great champions who have celebrated victory at the top of Arrate... Orbea, BH, GAC and other well-known brands such as Abelux, Saeta, Invicta and Norma were founded in this Gipuzkoan municipality. We propose a circular route with a real cycling flavour, the scene of great battles with two outstanding protagonists, Oiz (optional) and Arrate as the finish line, but without underestimating climbs such as Elgeta from Angiozar, Montekalbo, Gontzagarigana and San Miguel from Markina-Xemein.



117 km
Climb 2.696m



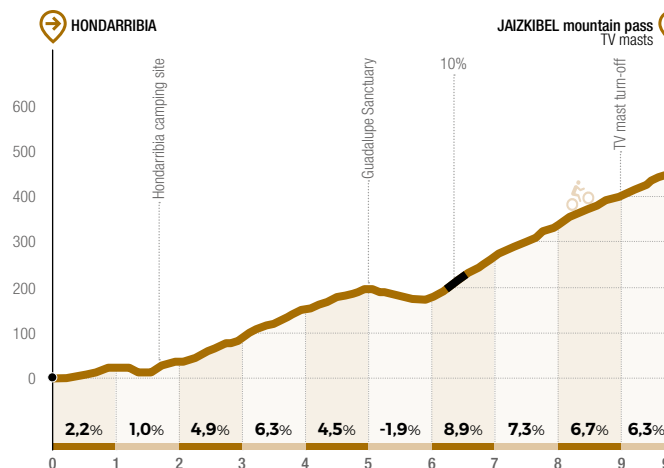
Legendary mountain passes

Jaizkibel 4

9.8 km

Climb 449m
Altitude 453m
Average Gradient 4.5%
Coefficient 92

It's not one of the toughest, but it does have the best views. Facing the sea between the villages of Hondarribia and Lezo, its climb is a real pleasure for cyclists. In August, Donostia-San Sebastián hosts one of the cycling classics that form part of the international calendar, with Jaizkibel mountain pass taking a starring role and serving as its hallmark feature.

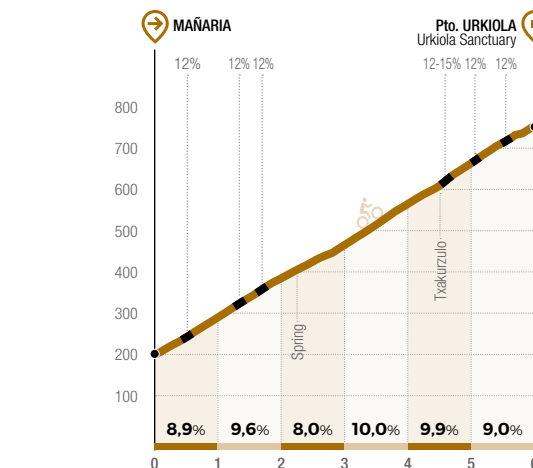


Urkiola 5

6 km

Climb 554m
Altitude 754m
Average Gradient 9.2%
Coefficient 161

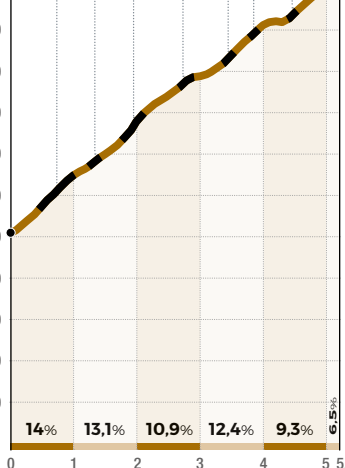
Cyclists of the stature of Julio Jiménez, Marino Lejarreta, Andrew Hampsten, Perico Delgado, and Claudio Chiappucci, to name just a few, have celebrated victory on this legendary climb in the province of Bizkaia. A mountain pass just 6km long with an average gradient of over 9%. Are you brave enough?



Oiz 6

5.2 km

Climb 604m
Altitude 1.019m
Average Gradient 11%
Coefficient 259



With an average gradient of 11%, we can say that Oiz is the toughest of the iconic mountain passes in the Basque Country. The victory of the Canadian cyclist Michael Woods in the seventeenth stage of the 2018 Tour of Spain will go down in history, being one of the nine new race finishes where the great Basque supporters made the riders feel at home, opening up like a zipper as they passed by. Javier Guillén -director of the tour- summed it up like this: "Oiz is a revelation."