

Route 6: Markina/Ondarroa

The pilgrims' way

The Santiago del Norte Pilgrims' Way appears before our eyes in this part of the district of Lea-Artibai. Markina-Xemein is home to the echoes of a medieval past which attracts pilgrims on their way to Santiago to retreat to the silent churches and the impressive harmony of Ziortza or Zenarruza Monastery. Historic heritage and extraordinary natural landscapes... a journey to the past.

Bilbao 
(Termibus)



The town of **Markina-Xemein** is the beginning and the end of two of the stages of the Jacobean route along the coast. You can get there on the **Bizkaibus A3916 bus** (Bilbao-Ermua-Ondarroa) or the **A3915** which goes through Markina-Xemein and Durango, both of which **alternate every half an hour**, leaving from the Termibus station. This ancient medieval town has preserved an extraordinary heritage with the grand solid stone buildings such as the towers of Bidarte, Antxia, Ansotegi, Barroeta and Ugarte; the palaces of Solartekua or Mugartegi (currently the Town Hall), Andonae-gi and Patrokua or Gaytan and Ayala House; other constructions include the Municipal Fishmonger's, the former City Hall and Goikoportala fountain.

The religious heritage includes San Miguel de Arretxinaga chapel (in which the figure of the saint appears between three enormous natural rocks), the convents of San José, Carmen, La Merced and San Agustín, and Santa Cruz shrine. Santa María de La Asunción de Xemein and the cemetery are National Monuments of Euskadi.

But Markina-Xemein is also known as the University of Pelota. The municipal *fronton* courts are where the great figures of *cesta punta*, the best known modality of Basque pelota, learnt to play together with other great pelota players in the hand, bat, *remonte* and *raqueta femenina* modalities.

We recommend two other places of interest to visit from this town. One of these is **Ziortza-Bolibar**, a small and friendly village, home to Simón Bolívar's ancestors, with a museum which can be visited. It is reached by taking the **Bizkaibus A3922** bus at the Iruzubieta stop in Markina-Xemein. This service runs from Mondays to Fridays. If you are visiting on a Saturday or holiday, it is approximately two kilometres on foot between Markina and Bolibar. In the parish of Santo Tomás there is a figure of Our Lady of Coromoto, the patron saint of Venezuela.

Follow the road from Bolibar for three kilometres to reach the **Monastery of Zenarruza** (former collegiate church) or Ziortza, an extraordinary and impressive monumental complex consisting of the church, the Abbot's houses, the pilgrims' hostel and the medieval

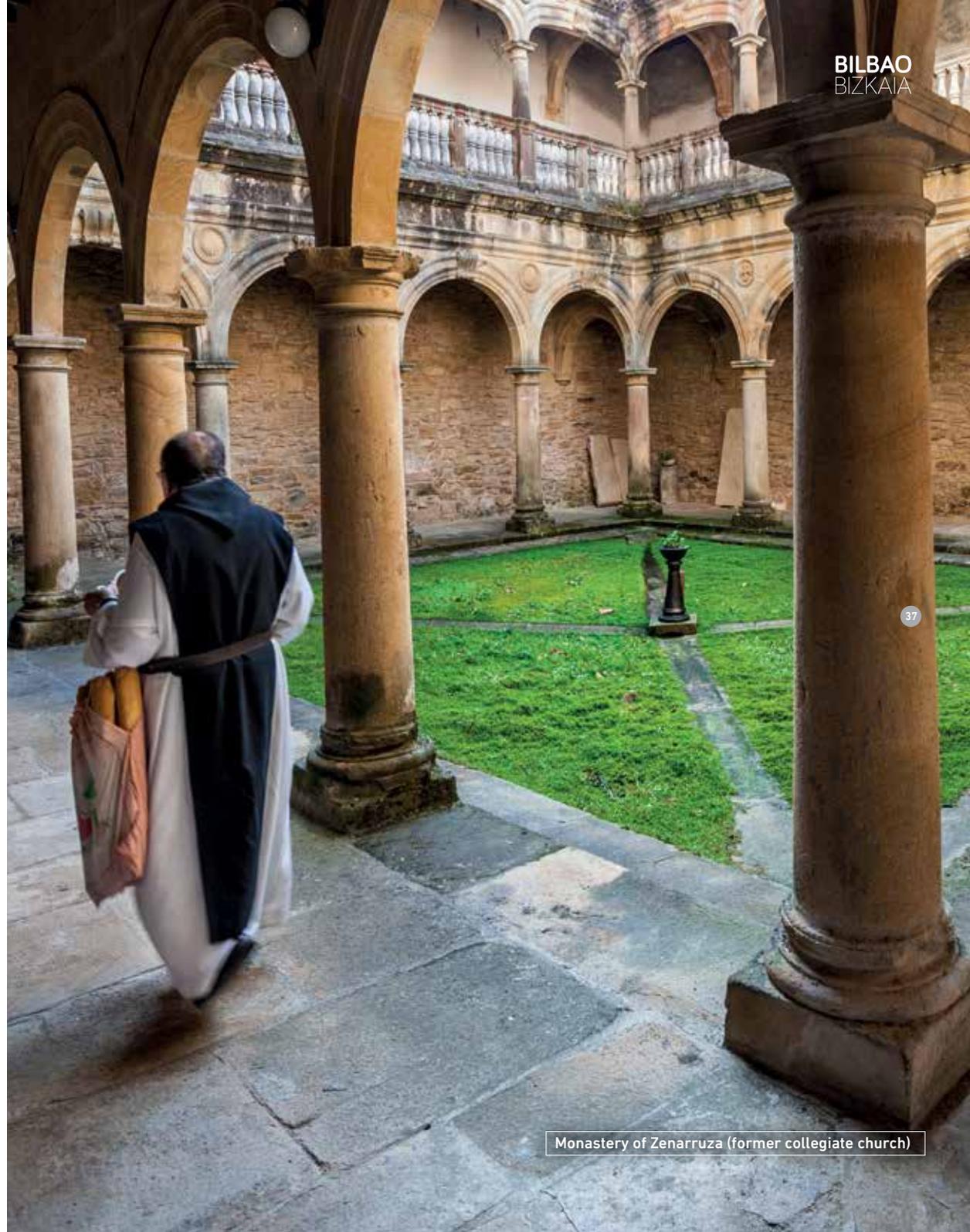
roadway. In particular the cloisters and the magnificent organ in its interior are of special note.

The other interesting town is **Ondarroa**. To visit it, take the **Bizkaibus A3916 bus** again.



Ondarroa

This is a town of great contrasts: tradition and modernity, sea and mountains, historic heritage and modern infrastructures.... Of particular note is the medieval Old Quarter, where you can clearly see the typical layout of houses huddled together in narrow staggered streets. You can also visit the former Town Hall, Likona tower, Santa Clara Brotherhood, Nuestra Señora de la Antigua chapel and Andra Mari church (with its Kortxeleko mamuak entourage, twelve figures representing the different social classes of the Middle Ages). Discover the bridges (Itsasaurre, the Old Bridge and Alfonso XIII footbridge) and of course, enjoy a day out on the coast.



Monastery of Zenarruza (former collegiate church)