

Route 9: Nervión

Velvet beech forests and magical caves

Orozko can be found among mountains, among rivers, beneath the Gorbeia mountain range, in the protected biotope of Itzina. This town is surrounded by a maze of caves, potholes, nooks and crannies, underground rivers, velvety beech forests, in a bountiful wilderness predisposed to the creation of myths and legends which have survived thanks to oral traditions. A landscape full of magic, replete with mysteries, secrets and natural treasures.

The Bizkaibus A3613 bus, the Bilbao-Ugao-Miraballes-Orozko line which leaves from Bailén street in Bilbao **every hour**, takes you to **Orozko**. This is a district dominated by landscapes of stunning beauty, archaeological and natural wealth, with Gorbeia Natural Park and mountains as the essential part of the natural heritage. In the centre of the park, the largest in Euskadi, lies the protected biotope of Itzina, which belongs to this Bizkaia town and which you get to through the Atxular Eye.

In Itzina nature and mythology go hand in hand. Beech forests covered with a green velvet coat and thin mists convert this landscape into a magical setting, replete with mysteries and secrets. Natural degradation has created a landscape full of potholes, underground rivers and mazes of caves, encouraging the appearance of myths and legends which remain alive thanks to oral tradition. Characters such as Mari, the Basajaunak, the Lamiak and the Sorginak weave countless tales which have marked the life of the valley.



Gorbeia Cross



Orozko

The Park also contains numerous constructions created by man, such as the iron cross erected on the highest point of Mount Gorbeia, *kirikiños* (chestnut stores), ice houses (cracks in the stone for storing snow all year round) and *txabolos* (small huts where shepherd spend the night). It also has one of the richest archaeological heritages of the district; there are eleven prehistoric sites in caves in Orozko alone.

Several routes of varying lengths and difficulties leave from this town for Gorbeia Natural Park, including those of Usabel and Belaustegi. Orozko also has an important archaeological heritage. Religious buildings include the parish churches of San Bartolomé de Olarte, San Pedro de Murueta and San Lorenzo de Urigoiti, and a huge number of chapels and shrines all over the region.



Bilbao
(c/ Bailén)

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Orozko

Gorbeia

The most characteristic buildings of civil architecture are Aranguren Tower, Torlanda Tower, Anunzibai bridge and the palaces of Ugarte, Torre and Aldama. Wander around the ruins of Untzuetta medieval castle, destroyed in the 15th century and home, as legend goes, to the Gentiles, mythological beings gifted with enormous strength.

The Ethnographic Museum, in Legorburu Palace House, aims to promote knowledge about the different aspects of the valley of Orozko: the Historic Heritage, traditional life and the settlers in the highlands of Gorbeia.

Orozko's economic activity has always focussed on agriculture, livestock and forestry. At the Tourist Office you can find out more about how to visit any of the producers and discover ancient methods of working bread, wood or cheese. Chorizo is another of the star products of the zone.

The Bizkaibus **A3613** line takes you back to Bilbao.



Gorbeia Beech forest