

Route 9. Around Bilbao

A bird's eye view of the city

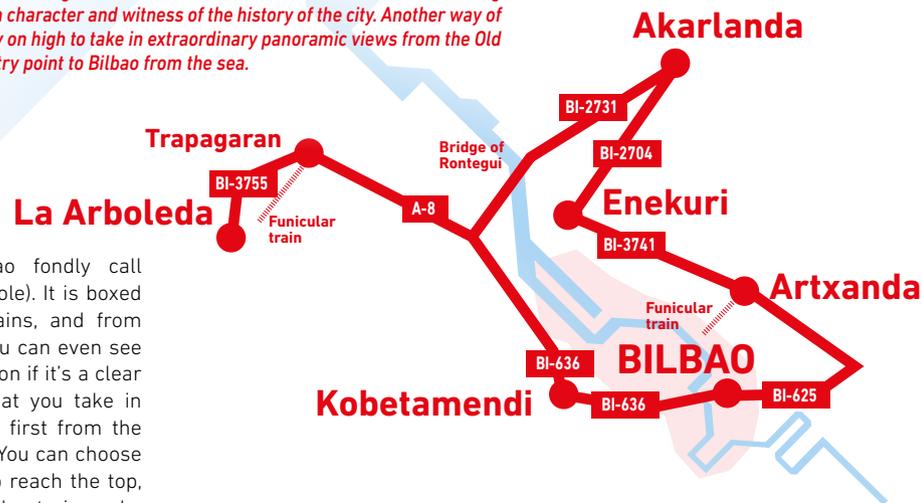
Nature has been generous in Bilbao. The mountains protect the city and offer open and green spaces. Height becomes an effective ally for contemplating the curious combination of historical buildings and new construction which mark out the meandering flow of the Ría, the main character and witness of the history of the city. Another way of seeing Bilbao, a journey on high to take in extraordinary panoramic views from the Old Quarter to the Abra, entry point to Bilbao from the sea.

People from Bilbao fondly call their city "Botxo" (hole). It is boxed in between mountains, and from these mountains you can even see the sea on the horizon if it's a clear day. We suggest that you take in these unique views first from the **Artxanda Lookout**. You can choose from two ways to reach the top, either the funicular train or by car. The most attractive ascent is the Artxanda Funicular Railway, which has communicated Bilbao with the summit since 1915. The journey takes no more than 3 minutes and you can catch the train in the Plaza del Funicular (Castaños Street).



Artxanda Funicular Railway

By car, leave Bilbao via the La Salve Bridge, passing below the great red doorway "L'arc rouge", by French artist Daniel Buren, and head towards Begoña (BI-625). At the first roundabout, take the exit towards Txurdinaga. At the next one, take the third exit and from here the signposts will guide us to **Artxanda**.



At the Lookout you will witness an extraordinary panoramic view of the city from the oldest part right up to its most recent constructions, and two sculptures will surprise you. El Engranaje, an original piece from the first Artxanda Funicular Railway, and "la Huella", in memory of the victims of the Spanish Civil War.

We continue our journey up on high towards **Akarlanda**, a leisure park which is perfectly integrated in nature. To get there, descend from Artxanda on the BI-3741

(Top of Enekuri) and take the first direction towards Asúa on the BI-604. Then continue on the BI-2704, towards Asúa/Loiu, until you arrive at a roundabout and proceed in the direction of Loiu/Plentzia. Akarlanda has a carpark, a football pitch, basketball court, a skateboard ramp... You can organise a picnic in the outdoor tables and visit the surroundings of the Martiartu Tower and Forestal Park, a large adventure park to enjoy with your family with games and spectacular cable slides between the trees.



La Arboleda

Our next visit will be the mining landscape of **La Arboleda**.

From Akarlanda, take the Leioa-Unbe (BI-2731) road and, at the first roundabout, go down the Unibersitateko Errepidea (BI-647) until you reach the BI-637 (all directions), at the next roundabout. Then take the A-8 towards Santander, taking the 126B exit at Ortuella/Trapagaran.

The ascent to La Arboleda from Trapagaran can be done by car, via a windy road (BI-3755), or in the La Reineta Funicular which offers spectacular views of the Abra de Bilbao. The Arboleda is an old mining town which stretches across the

Triano mountains and nearby is the Environmental Interpretation Centre of Peñas Negras. Several lakes can be found in this area which, in their day, were pits from old mining operations when iron excavation was carried out in the open air. Typical "alubiadas" can be tasted in the picturesque restaurants of the mining neighbourhood which remain frozen in time.

Our last panoramic view is in **Kobetamendi**, one of the green spaces of the capital of Biscay. From La Arboleda we descend to Trapagaran and once again take the A-8 towards Bilbao. First, take the 119 exit to join the BI-636 in the direction of Balmaseda. After taking

exit 5 (Zorrozoiti/Altamira) and following the signs for Kobeta, you will arrive at this leisure area. It's a fitting place for having fun with your family, it has a park next to a lake and offers some spectacular views of the city and its metropolis. The area is a highlight in the summer due to the celebration of the Bilbao pop-rock music festival BBK LIVE which, last year, managed to gather together more than 140,000 people.

To return to Bilbao, take the Basurto/Castrexana (BI-636) road and, after following the signs for Altamira, enter the capital.



Bilbao from Artxanda