

## Route 3. The east coast

### Dunes, character and painted forests

*The people of the sea are often reserved, looking upon the visitor with eyes that have witnessed storms, shipwrecks and solitude. The people of the sea drink in life in great gulps because they are aware of our fragility, because they dream from the distance of the dunes upon their beaches, of their forests as canvases. Their towns reveal character, their traditions pride, their festivals passion. Navigate amongst them on your journey.*



To get to **Gernika**, the starting point of this route, take the AP-8 towards Donostia-San Sebastián taking the Amorebieta-Etxano exit and continuing along the BI-635. Gernika, as mentioned in the previous route, is an obligatory place to visit in order to get to know the history and traditions of Biscay. Home of its famous peppers and beans, this town holds a market each Monday of the year and the large agricultural festival “el Último lunes de Gernika” (The last Monday of Gernika - on the last Monday in October).



Gernika-Lumo



Oma



We resume our journey heading towards the coast on the BI-2238. It's worth taking a detour at Korteizubi in order to discover the **Bosque de Oma** or “The Enchanted Forest”, a work by Agustín Ibarrola, an artistic collection of trees painted with eerie and suggestive optical effects. The **Santimamiñe Cave**, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2008, with a multitude of beautiful rock paintings and an interpretation centre with the latest explanatory technologies, complete the view.

**Markina-Xemein**  
Bolibar  
Zenarruza Monastery

Head back on the BI-2238 to steer towards Arteaga. In this town you have the opportunity to visit the **Urdaibai Bird Centre**, a living museum of birds and nature, and the **Arteaga Castle**, a neo-medieval castle inspired by French Gothic.

After this stop, our path leads us along the BI-3234 towards the beaches of **Laida and Laga**, a paradise of golden sands surrounded by tall mountains.



Laga



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Lekeitio

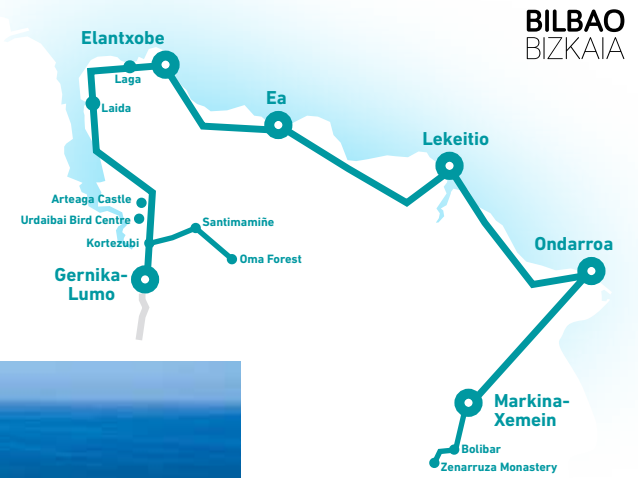
Unbeatable for bathing, you can surf, kayak, padel-surf or canoe along the Ría de Urdaibai. We continue on the BI-3234 and then turn onto the BI-3237 until we arrive at **Elantxobe**, a vertiginous town boxed in by two cliffs. In its port, you can relax in the tide pools.



Another 12 minutes by car, the BI-3238 takes us to the magic of **Ea**. A tiny fishing village that, with its little cove at the end of the Ría which crosses it, will take you in as soon as you set eyes on it. Following in fishermen's footsteps along the coast of Biscay, on the BI-3238 and the BI-2238 roads we arrive at **Lekeitio**. This town boasts a colourful port with a wide range of bars and restaurants, a legendary island and a majestic historic quarter.



We bid farewell to Lekeitio in order to head for **Ondarroa** on the panoramic BI-3438 road which runs alongside the sea. In the old part, the Likona Tower and the Andra Mari church (both from the 15th century) are well worth a visit.



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This route is ideal for trying the local gastronomy: the marmitako (a stew of tuna and potatoes), baby squid in their ink, grilled sea bream, clams in green sauce... All of this washed down with a good txakoli from Biscay.

From Ondarroa on the BI-633 we arrive at **Markina-Xemein**, a town which is framed within the Northern Saint James Way. Its Renaissance and Baroque palaces are evidence of its splendid past.



Some 4 kilometres from Markina-Xemein, towards Durango on the BI-633, following the signs towards **Ziortza-Bolibar** (BI-2224 and then BI-4401), is La Colegiata de Ziortza or **Zenarruza Monastery**. An important historical and artistic monument on the Northern Saint James Way, highlighted by its Plateresque-style cloister, the only one in Biscay.

To return to Bilbao, go back on the BI-633 towards Durango. There, take the AP-8 motorway towards Bilbao.