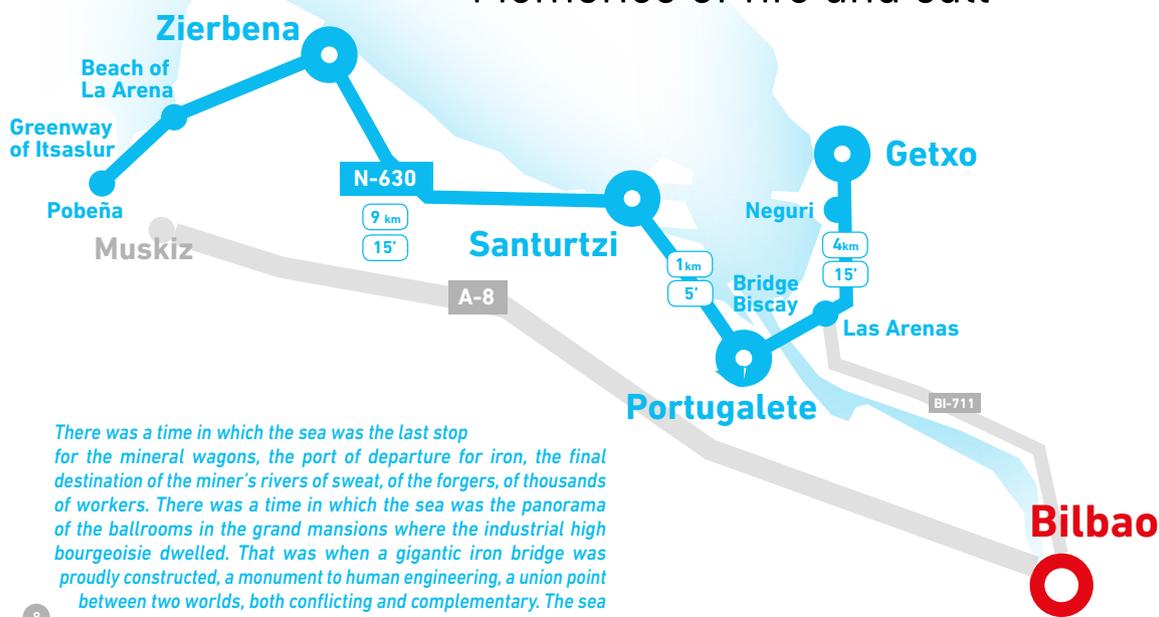


# Route 1. The west coast

## Memories of fire and salt



There was a time in which the sea was the last stop for the mineral wagons, the port of departure for iron, the final destination of the miner's rivers of sweat, of the forgers, of thousands of workers. There was a time in which the sea was the panorama of the ballrooms in the grand mansions where the industrial high bourgeoisie dwelled. That was when a gigantic iron bridge was proudly constructed, a monument to human engineering, a union point between two worlds, both conflicting and complementary. The sea of fire and salt, of tears and champagne.

We'll begin our trip by setting off from Bilbao on the A-8 motorway and heading for the Muskiz-La Arena exit, in the direction of **Pobeña**. Here we are faced with two options: the first one, to pass through the natural dunes of the **La Arena Beach** and the second one, which consists in exploring the **Itsasur Greenway**, an old railway line with the sea at your feet (approx. 2 hours. there and back).

Continue on the BI-3794 towards the town of **Zierbena**, a small port



La Arena Beach

which has retained its traditional charm with magnificent fish and seafood grills. The N-630 brings us to **Santurtzi**, where views on the left showcase the gigantic installations of the Bilbao Bridge.



Santurtzi

Santurtzi is the great seaside town of the west of Biscay. Its joyous sardine fishers, protagonists of the popular song, trailed their merchandise through the stony streets of their fishing port.

You can visit the Casa Torre Palace (18th century) with its historical interpretation centre.

The Cofradía de Pescadores building houses the Santurtzi Itsasoa Museum and one of the many restaurants offering a taste of the sea in this town. From here, during the summer months and with prior reservation, you can go on an excursion by boat to visit the whales in the waters of the Bay of Biscay. More information can be found at the Tourist Office in Santurtzi.

Taking the path which, in the past, our famous sardine fishermen once themselves walked along we will visit one of the last traditional wooden fishing boats left in Cantabria, the Atunero Agurtza.

Portugalete is a medieval town next to the Ría de Bilbao (Bilbao's estuary).



Bizkaia Bridge



Its Historic Quarter is well worth a visit, as is its Gothic-Renaissance Church of Andra Mari. We can stroll along the edge of the Ría until we reach the Torre de Salazar (Salazar Tower) and take in the charm of the Plaza del Solar with its neoclassical bandstand.

Finally, we invite you to feel the breeze and climb the iron giant which has been looking over us from high above for the last few hours. It's the Bizkaia Bridge, also called the Puente Colgante (Hanging Bridge). This great work of engineering has been a World Heritage Site, declared by UNESCO, since 2006 and represents the meeting point between the two banks of the Ría,

the left, industrial and working-class and the right, residential and bourgeois. We can cross it by car aboard its nacelle or we can walk along the vertiginous walkway on the top. It's truly an unforgettable experience.

Once we reach the other side we will arrive in Getxo, specifically in the district of Las Arenas. Getxo is a very extensive municipality and during this first route we suggest going as far as the district of Neguri. Walk alongside the sea admiring the grandeur of the palaces of the high bourgeoisie from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Their refined British style speaks of the influences and relationships which the entrepreneurial families of the time established with those islands. The stroll can be enjoyed in a traditional manner following the information panels or by solving the Magic Fly "clues" (requires a smartphone).

Returning to Bilbao is simple, the BI-637 is the quickest way, but if you're not in a rush we recommend taking the BI-711 back along the Ría to take in the spectacular industrial, steel-making and naval heritage marked out by cranes and therefore understand a little bit more about the history of a town connected to its sea by work, richness and the spirit of improvement.