

# lingua weekly

26<sup>th</sup> July 2007

## Day trips from Donosti

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If you haven't thought of where to go on holiday this year and don't want to go too far, I have an idea. If you haven't been to San Sebastián, you should come! The weather can only get better in August and I promise it's a thousand times safer than any bigger city.

The good thing about San Sebastián is that it only takes a day or two to see the sights. You don't have to go much further than the *Parte Vieja*, *Centro* or *Gros*, as most of what you'll want to see and do (and eat) is around there. Then you can lie back and relax or you can move around the area, which has a lot to offer. I'm going to tell you about my favorite spots.

If you want beaches, go to Hendaye or Zarautz. They are longer and therefore there is more room for expansion. Looking at the sea, the further right you go, the more space you'll have. This is not what happens on *La Concha*, where the population density increases to the right and usable space becomes inexistent on the other side; even a *toldo* won't save your towel's place! If waves are what you're looking for, try the beaches in Les Landes, France. Hossegor has a huge beach but I, personally, don't swim there for fear of my life. The salt water lake nearby offers waveless fun and one of my favorite places to eat *fruits de mer* is right there.

In Gipuzkoa, my favorite coastal towns are Pasajes San Juan Pasai Donibane, which has just one street, and Getaria, home of explorer Juan Sebastián Elcano and lots of statues of him. The easiest way to get to San Juan is by boat, crossing the port of Pasajes. To get to Getaria, go through Zarautz. Eat in either one of those places and check out the churches, too.

Deep in the mountains of Gipuzkoa lies Oñati. Go there. It will take you longer to get there than it will to see the town but I think it's worth it. The Plateresque university and its cloister is really something to see, as well as the town square with its church and town hall. If you have time, go to Loyola (Azpeitia) and say hello to Saint Ignatius, and to Bergara, a grey yet monumental town known for its *rellenos* and its UNED branch.

On the other side of the Bidasoa, you'll find more of my personal favorites. Try Saint-Jean-de-Luz for a walk down the *Rue Gambetta* and lunch. Louis XIV got married in its beautiful church and Maurice Ravel was born just across the port in Ciboure. In my opinion, Bayonne is the loveliest city in the area, though those from Biarritz might argue that point. Espelette is a quaint little town a little further in, famous for its *piments*. If you're around on the last weekend in October, why not try the *Fête du Piment*, where you can buy and eat peppers and all kinds of other Basque and French foods. Further in is Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port (Donibane Garazi), where you'll go a few hundred years back in time. It won't take long to see the town, on the Way of St. James, but a drive around the area's countryside will leave you breathless, especially in early summer, when it is endlessly green. Cross into Navarra for more photo opportunities.

In San Sebastián, you're also an hour away from Bilbao's titanium, the sun that also rises in Pamplona, or the *Fiestas de la Blanca* in Vitoria, a week before our own *Semana Grande*. I know don't need to promote my city, but why not share a few favorites? Happy August!