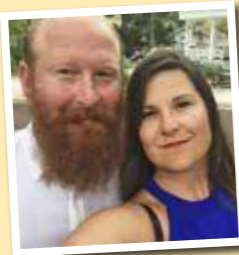


# Your Holiday

Insider tips and the best places to go

Last August, my partner Joe and I travelled to Europe, driving down the west coast of France, Spain and into Portugal, staying in our campervan for almost three weeks. But of all the places we visited, Spain's San Sebastián stole our hearts – the social people who eat late and rise slowly the next day, the coastline, the old cobblestone streets and the world-renowned pintxos bars all have me dreaming of our next stay in this vibrant town.



From:  
Danielle Sherring,  
32 Bulli, NSW.



A hotel with a twist

to read about superstars like Woody Allen and Al Pacino who have fallen in love with the Spanish city as we walked through the hotel's hallways.

Our room included a full buffet brekkie both mornings, but we adapted pretty quickly to the European lifestyle and missed it one day because we overslept. Not that it was a problem – the hotel is surrounded by plenty of delicious cafes and restaurants, and the most amazing deli, with cured meats, and the best cheeses and breads I've ever eaten, just around the corner.

The hotel is walking distance from the city's main tourist attractions, as well as La Concha Bay beach, which is perfect for

families, Zurriola beach in the Gros region which is great for surfers, and The Old Town, where you'll find the famous pintxos bars that bring tourists to San Sebastián year-round. You can basically walk

everywhere here – it's an easy city to navigate, although, in truth, Joe and I managed to get pretty lost one day walking back from the beach, but that's all part of the fun of exploring a new place.

## A pintxo party

San Sebastián is a world-famous food destination – food is a celebration here, an art form. And there is no better way to taste what the gastronomical capital has to offer than by touring the pintxos bars of Old Town with Eskerne from Discover San Sebastian (discoversansebastian.com). Eskerne, or "Esky" as she tells us her Aussie clients often call her, is so knowledgeable and passionate about the history and food culture of San Sebastián – she is just pure joy!

Joe and I could have stayed with her all day, drinking Txakoli (the white wine of the region) and eating like locals.

We visited five places and sampled everything from ham and beef cheek to a Basque delicacy, fish chin!

The area is also known for its cider, and we learned how to drink it as the locals do. Pouring the cider into a glass from a height at restaurant Bernardo Etxea was fun... if not a little messy!

Walking the buzzing cobblestone laneways with wafts of seafood and pungent spices filling the air, Eskerne tells us that for hundreds of years, gastronomy clubs have existed in San Sebastián. They were historically boys' clubs, where men would meet to cook and eat together, sharing their love of good food and wine.

These clubs still exist, although many have relaxed the 'boys only' rule – not all – and are often hidden behind big wooden



We drank the local cider

doors that you walk past in The Old Town, still filled with members eating, cooking and laughing together.

The pintxos tour was unequivocally a highlight of our stay in San Sebastián, if not of our entire trip.

## Fun for all ages

Eating isn't the only thing to do in San Sebastián, although it should be a priority, there's so much for the family to see and experience.

A great way to get to know

the city is by doing a bike tour with Donostia San Sebastián tourism. There are also museums, the markets, an art gallery, aquarium and a theme park with old-fashioned charm at the top of Mount Igueldo.

To get to the top of the mountain – where you'll also experience uninterrupted views of the beautiful coast – ride the funicular railway, which has been running since 1912.

Standing on top of Mount Igueldo, you'll see how much this colourful city by the sea has to offer.

The city's architecture and waterways are stunning



## Stay with the stars

After 10 days in the van, we decided two nights in a plush hotel bed was well deserved. We stayed at the Astoria7 – a cool hotel that's themed around cinema, with each

room dedicated to a film star, actor or director who has attended the San Sebastián International Film Festival at some point in its history. The walls are adorned with information about the city's rich film culture, so it was fun

# Postcard from San Sebastián

The coastal town in Spain's Basque region is truly delicious

## Foodie tips

It can be overwhelming choosing what bars to eat at and what to eat, so here's a small guide of what to order and where...

**BERNARDO ETXEA**  
www.bernardoetxea.com

- Prawn brochette
- Octopus
- Try their cider!

**GANBARA**  
www.ganbarajatetxea.com

- Fried white asparagus with mayonnaise
- Crab tartlets

**CASA UROLA**  
www.casaurolojatetxea.es

- Scallops with almond and garlic cream and coffee vinaigrette
- Beef stew on a red wine sauce

**TXULETA**  
www.txuletaestaurante.com

- T-Bone steak croquette
- Order a beer with a mini burger for 2.50€... just \$3.45!

Ride from Zurriola Beach to Old Town for pintxos



WORDS BY DANIELLE SHERRING PICTURES: ISTOCK, GETTY IMAGES