



EUSKAL KULTUR ERAKUNDEA
INSTITUT CULTUREL BASQUE

Euskal Herriko Aurpegiak

Navigating the Basque Country



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Introduction to the DVD

Clearly the best way to know the Basque Country or any other place is being there but, in order to do that, we have to have the time and the wherewithal to get there. When this is not feasible, we have no choice but to refer to books which, at times, may not be easy – unless there is an alternative. In today's world an alternative is the use of new technologies.

Interactive systems are attractive and spark curiosity in us all. Moreover, the possibilities offered by multimedia resources signify an unparalleled means of acquiring information in a pleasant, rapid and suitable way. This is what we have aimed to do with this DVD: we have gathered and prepared information, accompanied with a number of images, all of which offer a rapid but complete perspective of the Basque Country for anyone sitting in front of a PC screen.

Our aim has been to produce a DVD for use both at home and in educational situations. Also, given that it is aimed at both Basque citizens and at persons from other places, the DVD offers all the information in four languages: Basque, Spanish, French and English.

As we have already said, the aim is not to undertake a thorough analysis nor offer exhaustive data on the Basque Country, but to get to know the main characteristics of its political, historical, cultural and geographical evolution. This is why, and following a written and spoken script, we have introduced audio, video images, photographs, and animations.

We have trawled the relevant information in libraries and photo archives and the graphical aspect of the publication has taken on significant proportions, with some 85% of the DVD given over to the visual aspect. Here are some details:

- 1- text: 16,000 characters
- 2- photographs: about 300
- 3- video-clips: about 50
- 4- music: 20 pieces
- 5- duration: about 60 minutes



Overall aims

- To provide opportunities to get to know and to contribute in valuing the diversity of the social community to which the DVD users belong, getting to know and to value the elements dealt with therein.
- To present historical and social events that help to better understand current society, encouraging critical and reasoned opinions.
- To get to know and to respect linguistic and cultural variety, without renouncing the spirit of criticism.
- To get to know the relationships established by society with its surroundings as regards the use of space and natural resources, and to assess the economic, social, political and ecological consequences of such relations.
- To value and respect the natural, cultural, linguistic, artistic, historical and social heritage, being conscious of the need to protect and enhance all therein and accepting such heritage as a source of enjoyment and using it as a resource for individual and collective development.

Contents

We have attempted to offer the widest possible perspective of the Basque Country and, in this regard, we have analysed the following aspects:

- history
- geography and economy
- Basque language (Euskara) history
 - current situation
 - structure
- culture
 - plastic arts
 - literature
 - *bertsolaritza* (extemporary verse singing)
 - cinema
 - music and songs
 - dance
 - theatre



- Customs
 - o sports
 - o fiestas
 - o cuisine

We have not attempted to analyse in an exhaustive manner each one of these aspects, but to offer an overall, though complete, vision of the Basque Country.

In undertaking this project we have used 400 images, 10 minutes of video recordings and 15 musical fragments, as well as a number of audiovisual presentations.

History

A short presentation of the history of the Basque Country: the origin of the Basques, important aspects of the history of their country (the kingdom of Navarre, parliamentary foral rights, the Carlist wars, and so on), political-administrative divisions, the singular relations and characteristics of the Basque Country on either side of the Pyrenees (*Iparralde* and *Hegoalde*), the current political-administrative divisions, etc.

Together with the most emblematic events throughout the history of the Basque Country, we also present archaeological and other sites with some of their artefacts, all legacies from our ancestors.

Economy and geography

A short description of the physical geography of the Basque Country (mountains, rivers, climate, valleys, natural spaces) and its administrative divisions (capitals, provinces, regions).

Moreover, there is a brief presentation on the economy that is closely linked to the geographical area, as well as its evolution throughout history and on the most significant aspects of the current situation.



Culture

We have attempted to highlight elements of Basque culture: music, literature, the extempore verse-singing in Basque, called *bertsolaritza*, etc. The evolution of each of these over the years is presented, as well as their best-known authors and key works and moments, etc.

This DVD user will be able to view photographs of works of art and will have the opportunity of listening to music and verses that complete the narrator's text. As we explained above, this section is divided into seven parts: plastic arts, dance, music and song, written literature, *bertsolaritza*, theatre and the cinema.

Lifestyles

Analysis of people's customs provides considerable information about a particular place: where people live, how they live, the characteristics of the typical buildings of the place, the customs of daily life, etc.

Evidently, the customs of those Basques who lived 200 years ago are quite different from those of today, but the connection between both exists and this is what we try to illustrate here. We have highlighted the connections between architecture, *fiestas*, sport, leisure and gastronomy with customs of Basques.

Language

The most characteristic and differentiating aspect of the Basques is the language – Euskara or the Basque language. Of uncertain origin it is the oldest in Europe. On this DVD we analyse the possible origins of this tongue, the geographical area in which it has been spoken over the millennia, the distribution of its dialects and the current situation of the language.



In order that users might understand the language, there are numerous examples: for example, the user is offered the possibility of hearing the different dialects of the Basque language, together with their meanings.

The material can be used in many different ways; for example, as an educational aid prior or subsequent to dealing with history, literature, geography and the economy of the Basque Country, amongst other topics.

As regards the technical side of things, it is user-friendly. Just follow these simple steps:

1. Insert the DVD into the reader. It will be activated instantly.
2. After the credits and initial visuals, the language selection menu will appear. You only have to click on one of the four languages to select: Basque, Spanish, French or English.
3. Once the language is selected, select a theme: history, culture, language, economy, geography and lifestyles.
4. If we select culture, language or lifestyles, we enter the sub-options of the other menu, where we can click on the option we wish to select. Once we have selected what we want, the DVD programme will be initiated and we will be able to watch it and listen to it.
5. If, apart from watching and listening to the disc contents, we wish to read the text, we have two options:
 - a. Press the corresponding button on the remote control handset, if we are using the television set.
 - b. If we are using the PC, click with the mouse.So, we use the remote control handset (television set) or click with the mouse (PC) to go forwards or go back or to select themes.

If any technical problem should arise, do not hesitate to contact us through our webpage or e-mail us at:

laquntzateknikoa@elhuyar.com



HISTORY

The personality of the Basque Country today is the consequence of its past history down the centuries.

The first known inhabitants of the Basque Country date from the Lower Palaeolithic, approximately 200,000 years ago.

Some Palaeolithic sites in the Basque Country:

- The cave at Ekain
- The cave at Amalda (Zestoa)
- The grotto of Benta Laperra (Karrantza)
- The grottoes of Isturitze
- The caves at Santimamiñe

As well as:

Axlor in Bizkaia
Lezetxiki in Gipuzkoa
Aitzabal in Araba
The Urbasa sites in Navarre
Olha in Lapurdi
Gatzarria in Zuberoa

And a few more

Which correspond to the Neolithic era and to the Iron or Bronze Ages

Dolmens

Cromlechs

and the cemeteries and prehistoric settlements of the Basque Country

When Romans came to the Basque Country, about 200 years before the birth of Christ,

Basques were divided into tribes:

the Autrigoni,

the Caristi,

the Varduli

and the Vascons.

Romans stayed in the Basque Country for three or four centuries, but without ever dominating it wholly. Their influence and rule undoubtedly left its mark on the plains ('Ager'), but was weak in the mountain areas ('Saltus').

Romans stayed in the Basque Country until the fall of their Empire, although their presence was never massive.

On the disappearance of the Romans, the Vascons dominated the territory, although in permanent struggle with peoples from Europe.

The Vascons had to confront, successively,
The Suevians, the Vandals and the Alans

And the Franks and the Visigoths.

Likewise, Muslims arrived from North Africa and reached as far as the south of Navarre.

The territory inhabited by the Vascons underwent the following evolution from the IX century on:

1.- The Duchy of Vasconia, created by the Visigoths between the Pyrenees and the area currently occupied by the North Basque Country.

2.- The Kingdom of Navarre, created to stop the expansion by the Franks and the Muslims. This kingdom extended from the Pyrenees to the south of the Basque Country and included the current continental Navarre (Nafarroa Beherea or Lower Navarre).

Eneko Aritza was the first king of Navarre (IX century).

In 1515, Fernando The Catholic, king of Spain, conquered Upper (peninsular) Navarre and placed it under the crown of Castille.



In Lower Navarre, however, the Kingdom lasted until 1617, year in which King Henry III of France decided to place it under his rule.

From these dates on the destiny of the Basque Country was inexorably linked to France and Spain.

Despite interminable political and military conflicts, The Middle Ages was a period rich in developments in the Basque Country. The Basque Country (Lapurdi, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia) became important in many respects from the XII century on.

Apart from fishing, maritime transport of goods was a great source of income, given that Castilian wool and iron-ore from our mines were exported from Basque ports.

Through these same ports entered cloth and textiles from Europe.

Not only were the Basque ports used for trade but they were also points of departure for numerous expeditions:

that of Juan Sebastián Elcano (first circumnavigation of the globe), that of Miguel López de Legazpi and Andrés Urdaneta (they conquered the Philippine Islands), etc.

It was also times of plenty for the interior.

The road to Santiago, obligatory route for goods and pilgrims, boosted the economy.

Along the road to Santiago, and thanks to the *fueros* (charter law granting Basques certain rights), new towns or *villas* were built.

Thanks to these Charters, the provinces in the South (peninsular) Basque Country were able to govern themselves to a great extent.

After the French Revolution (1789), the Basque provinces lying to the north of the Pyrenees were abolished and substituted by departments (90 throughout the Republic).

Since then, the three provinces which historically form part of the North Basque Country (Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule or Zuberoa) have formed part, together with Bearne, of department number 64.

The Carlist Wars were fought in the South Basque Country throughout the XIX century.

This was when the *fueros* here were lost.



The monarchy succeeded the Carlist Wars,
the Spanish Republic and
the Civil War.

After the death of the dictator Franco, there came the so-called 'Democratic Transition' in the Spanish State, which gave rise to a number of political changes in the South Basque Country.

En 1981 the Basque Government was created, on Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa approving the Gernika Statute of Autonomy.

Navarre was destined to have its own government and parliament.

The Basques of the diaspora, for their part, continue to have close links with the Basque Country.

The number of Basques or descendants of Basque in the diaspora (10 million) is much greater than the number of inhabitants of the Basque Country.

GEOGRAPHY

The Basque Country is located in the south-west of Europe, lying between rivers Aturi to the north and the Ebro to the south.

It can be divided into two great watersheds: the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The mountain chains of the Pyrenees, Aralar, Aizkorri and Gorcebia form a dividing line between the two.

The climatic variation, in turn, gives rise to significant differences in scenery, mountains, valleys, plains and so on, and the Atlantic part has a coastline.

The area in this Atlantic part is mountainous, as the Pyrenees, extend almost to the sea.

At the western edge of the Pyrennes the highest peaks on the Basque Country are found: Hiru Errege Mahaia, Kartzela, Orhi...

Apart from the Pyrenees, there are many mountains inextricably linked to the traditions of the Basque Country and to its history.



Gorbeia
Aizkorri
Anboto
Aralar

The climate in the Mediterranean part is hot and dry. That of the extreme south of Navarre is known for its aridity.

As a result, the rivers in this part do not have water permanently although they are longer than those that flow into the Atlantic.

All the rivers in the Mediterranean watershed flow, logically, into the Mediterranean, as they are all tributaries of the Ebro.

It is in this part – in Araba and Navarre - that the biggest plains in the Basque Area are found.

The climate in the Atlantic watershed is rainy and humid throughout the year.

It is a climate which favours rivers having a flow of water permanently.

The rivers are short and form wide valleys, due to erosion.

Villages and towns were built on the fertile lands of these valleys.

The water from these rivers is used for human consumption and to provide hydroelectric energy.

The rivers in the Atlantic watershed reach the coast and empty into the Gulf of Bizkaia.

The coast of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia is rugged with many coves, islands and inlets.

In Labourd to the north, on the other hand, the coast is a gentle and flat one.

THE ECONOMY

Given the geographic characteristics we have just outlined, the primary sector has always been of great importance in the Basque Country.



Fishing and agriculture are activities with a very long tradition, although much of the vibrancy of this sector has now been lost.

Today agriculture and animal husbandry focus on quality (certificates of origin, labels of quality, and so on).

However, it is the industrial sector that is the motor of the economy of the Basque Country – and has been for some time now – especially in the South (the peninsular Basque Country).

The metallurgical sector continues to be the principal industry, although there are many paper mills, chemical works and timber/furniture factories too.

Basque industry is very competitive and markets its products to outside, especially European, markets.

The importance of cooperative enterprises in the Basque economy should also be pointed out as they are a unique example of symbiosis between work and business.

Besides industry, the services sector is the most important in the Basque economy. This sector is precisely the one that has grown sharply in the last decade of the XX century.

The financial sector (also with a long tradition), business services, retail business and tourism are the other pillars of our economy.

THE ARTS

THE ARTS: CINEMA

The first fiction movies in the Basque Country were filmed in Bilbao in 1923.

Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the first film of Basque cinema was *Amaiur*, filmed in 1968 and largely based on the thinking of the sculptor Jorge Oteiza.

The 80's were the real 'fertile decade' of Basque cinema production.



THE ARTS: THEATRE

The *pastoral* is a kind of theatrical spectacle which tells a story. It is acted in the open air and the performance is sung throughout.

Each year a different village in Zuberoa is chosen for the preparation of the *pastoral*. It is performed twice, always in summer.

This form of popular theatre dates from the Middle Ages. The play's plot basically consists of extolling the virtues of well-known figures (kings, saints, and so on) and in recalling various historical events. From the Middle ages to our days the characters have been based on famous Basques or world social and political events.

Both the *mascaradas* of Zuberoa and the 'kabaldakak' from Navarre are expressions of street or popular theatre. Dancing is an integral part of the spectacle.

Basque theatre today can boast a number of authors. Their original works or ones translated into Basque are performed every year.

THE ARTS: SCULPTURE

Down the centuries, Basque art has shown itself to be highly fertile in its many facets.

From the four-headed 'lauburus' carved in stone in times of yore to the contemporary sculptures of Oteiza and Chillida, the creativity of our artists has been notable.

THE ARTS: BERTSOLARITZA (IMPROVISED VERSE-SINGING)

One of the most characteristic expressions of Basque culture is undoubtedly the impromptu or improvised singing of verses - *bertsolaritza*.

The singer or bertsolari has to improvise verses in the Basque language, following a pre-determined melody, respecting rhyme and working to a set topic.

This tradition – on the point of disappearing in a number of places – is highly popular and well-regarded in the Basque Country, particularly so



in specific situations such as rest house, cider-houses and generally places where locals meet.

Amongst Basques, the fame of the great *bertsolaris* is without match. Some *bertsolari* names are remembered even after they have long gone.

At the beginning of the XX century *bertsolari* championships began to be organised and, at the end of the same century, *bertsolari* schools were set up.

The new generation of young *bertsolaris* has raised this art form to heretofore unimaginable levels of quality and with great success.

THE ARTS: DANCE

Traditional dance (the 'soka-dantzas' or the 'mutxikos', and so on) is one of our greatest cultural expressions.

Dance, the beauty and symbolism of which are part of popular fiestas, have roots that are buried in ancestral ritual.

The last half-century has witnessed the appearance of new styles, thanks to the innovative work of a number of choreographers and *dantzaris*.

THE ARTS: MUSIC AND SINGING

Some of the traditional instruments which can be heard in the Basque Country are: xirula, txistu, alboka, gaita, dulzaina, txalaparta, ttun-ttuna, trikitixa, pandero and the atabal. Do you know them?

Some great composers saw the light of day in the Basque Country: Gorriti, Guridi, Sarasate, Ravel...

In the world of Basque music, singing takes prime place and, throughout the history of the Basque Country, the oral tradition has left us a treasure-store of verses, passed down from generation to generation.

The 'new Basque singing' arose in the 1960s, influenced by the international folk movement and with certain young singers opting to sing both old and contemporary songs in Basque as well as their own compositions.



Rock music came onto the Basque cultural scene about 1975.

Today, there is no musical style that is not sung in Basque. Over the last thirty years, Basque singing has injected new life into the recovery of the language at a local level.

THE ARTS: LITERATURE

Written Basque literature arose from a rich oral tradition. Witness to this is the infinity of legends, refrains and poems handed down through this tradition.

Written Basque literature arose late in the day if we compare it with literature in the main European languages.

The first book published in Euskara is dated 1545.

Currently more than a thousand titles are published annually in Basque.

Early Basque literature was written by churchmen, they being almost the only persons who could write in the language.

Published works in Basque by lay authors – and on all subjects - began to appear in the middle of the XIX century.

Many of these works have been translated into other languages.

CUSTOMS AND WAY OF LIFE

CUSTOMS AND WAY OF LIFE / BASQUE GASTRONOMY

The secrets of Basque cuisine – based on local products from the land and the sea – have been handed down from generation to generation, adapting to changes in taste with time.

The ever-increasing fame of Basque gastronomy is due to the quality of its local products.



CUSTOMS AND WAY OF LIFE / SPORT & LEISURE

The daily toil on the land over, the *baserritarras* (Basque farmers) used to challenge each other in order to measure their respective strengths and skills.

This is the origin of today's Basque rural sports' competitions and displays.

Basque pilota or handball –a sport that demands strength, skill and agility – is widespread in the Basque Country but is also played outside Euskal Herria.

The championships in handball (played with the bare hand) and *cesta punta* (played with a basket-weave scoop and also known as Jai-Alai) are evermore popular as spectator sports.

The Basque Country is an ideal place for practising any kind of sport.

CUSTOMS AND WAY OF LIFE / FIESTAS

The Basque Country keeps the fire of popular, local festivals alive. They are held throughout the year: some are religious in that they coincide with a particular saint's day: others, on the other hand, go back further and recall ancient rites and customs.

Apart from these fiestas, the coming together of masses of people in favour of *Euskara*, the Basque language, has become a regular feature in the calendar of festivals.

January-February-March-April-May-June-July-August-September-
October-November-December

Santa Ageda 342

Carnival 371-372-275-271-387-482 / EJ.16-86

Mascaradas 273-261-127-274-256 / B.4

Besta Berri 227-228-272

Village fiestas 375-269-229-231-230-95-83-79-320-425 / EJ.75-118

Festivals 316-318-74-70 / EJ.19-106

CUSTOMS AND WAY OF LIFE / ARCHITECTURE

The traditional dwelling – the centre of social and family life – has always been the heart of Basque society.



The type of farmhouse varied according to the zone, with a great variety of styles.

At present in the Basque Country, old edifices (farmhouses, villas, etc.) share the architectural landscape with modern urban building. Town planning and house-building has caused a radical change in this landscape.

Contemporary architecture shows a multitude of styles and tendencies.

THE LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE/STRUCTURE

Basque is a unique language, clearly marked out from the Indo-European languages which surround it:

- All the letters are pronounced
- The current alphabet does not use the letters c, q, v or y in Basque words
- There is no gender
- Basque that is used today contains words that have come from proto-Euskara and from other languages.

The singularity of Basque lies in its syntax.

Apart from this, a number of dialects of the language exist.

Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte carried out an important study of these in 1863 and classified them thus: Bizkaiera (Biscay); Gipuzkera (Gipuzkoa); Upper (Northern) Nafarrera, north of the Pyrenees; Lapurtera (in Labourd); Lower (Western) Nafarrera and Lower (Eastern) Nafarrera, both on the south side of the Pyrenees and Zuberera (in Soule).

The map recently drawn up by researcher Koldo Zuazo refers only to six dialects.

**Zer hartu du etxeko neska ?
Etxeko neska ogia hartu du.
bread.**

**What did the farmhouse girl get?
The farmhouse girl got (did get)**



LANGUAGE / HISTORY

Basque (Euskara) is one of the oldest languages in Western Europe, preceding the Indo-European tongues. Various scholars claim that there exist nexus between Basque and Iberian, Berber or some of the languages found around the Caucasus, but the origins of Euskara remain a mystery.

In bygone times, Basque was spoken over a wide territory which stretched from the river Ebro to the south northwards to the banks of the Garonne and from the western Pyrenees as far as Catalonia. This territory was diminished bit by bit due to invasions (by Celts, Romans, etc.) and, since the XIX century, Euskara has lost half of its zone of influence.

Toponyms provide us with a great number of vestiges of Basque (names of rivers, mountains, villages, farm or townhouses...), many of them going back to before the Middle Ages.

The Euskaltzaindia or Basque Academy of Letters was created in 1918 with the aim of preserving, carrying out research on and spreading knowledge and use of the Basque language.

In 1968 the Academy decided to officially lay down the criteria for the unification of the Basque language: 'euskara batua' or unified Basque was born.

This unification and standardisation has been an essential instrument for Basque to overcome the challenges posed by contemporary society. Despite the setbacks suffered throughout its history, our language continues to be vibrant in the Basque Country.

Since 1979 Euskara has been – together with Spanish – the co-official language of the Basque Country Autonomous Community and, since 1982, of one part of Navarre. In the North Basque Country, despite various campaigns in favour for official recognition for the use of Basque, our language has not yet achieved this status within French public administration.

LANGUAGE/ CURRENT SITUATION

The number of people who currently speak Euskara – counting those within the Basque Country as well as in the rest of the world – comes to almost 700,000. Gipuzkoa is the most Basque-speaking territory.



In the Basque Autonomous Community and also in the North Basque Country (as the Basque Country within the French Republic is called), the proportion of Basque speakers is one in four while in (peninsular) Navarre it is one in ten.

The process of linguistic normalisation initiated 20 years ago in the Basque Autonomous Community has borne fruit: six out of ten young people know the Basque language.

In the North Basque Country, however, the process is going the opposite way: only one in ten young people speak Euskara, which places our language in this territory amongst the 3,000 which, according to UNESCO, is in danger of disappearing.

Despite the odds, the teaching of Basque continues to advance: apart from the great success of the public sector and private sector *ikastolas* where the Basque language is the teaching medium for all subjects, there are non-total immersion methods at other public sector schools and in Roman Catholic grant-aided.

A great number of degree courses can also be taken in Euskara in all the territories.

Throughout the Basque Country, a number of public and private bodies encourage the literacy of adults in the language: 50,000 people are currently learning our language in this manner.

Euskara has become a language of communication.

In 1982, the Basque Government created Euskal Telebista, the Basque public television corporation.

Also, a number of radio stations broadcast in Basque throughout the whole country.

The press in Basque has also experienced significant growth over the last 20 years.

Likewise, the language has been able to take great advantage of new ICTs (multimedia groups, Internet, and so on).

Apart from all this, the official recognition of the Basque language has boosted it in areas such as education, public administration, road signs, etc, in a good part of the Basque Country.

There are also numerous initiatives under way for literacy in society and for the encouragement of the use of Euskara.



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In the North Basque Country, Basque is used in public life more than it was some years ago but there is still a long way to go as regards transmission between generations, teaching and many other spheres.



Authors

Euskal kultur erakundea – Institute Cultural basque (EKE)
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