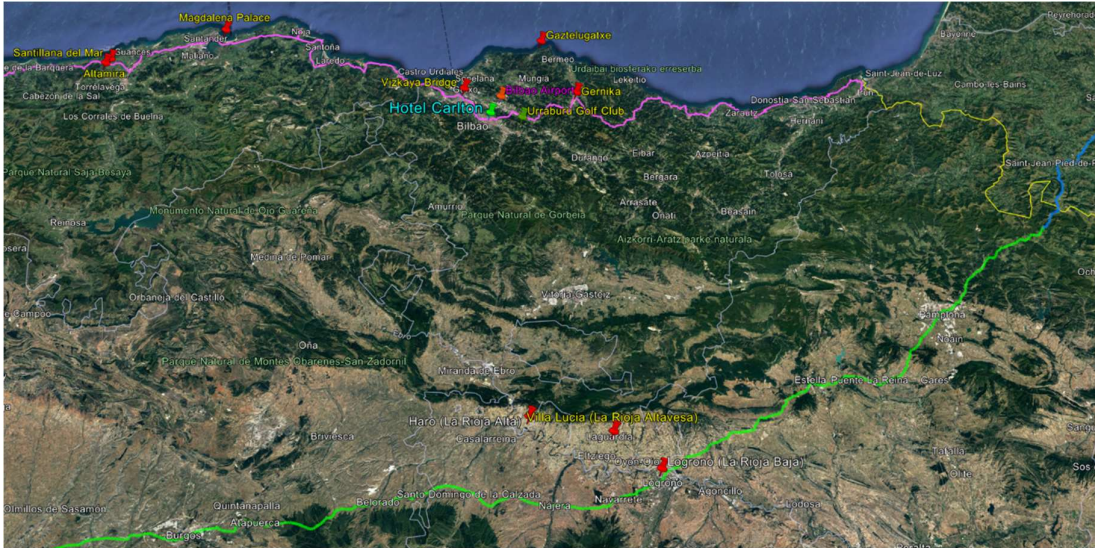


THE SCHLUMBERGER ALLIANCE BILBAO REUNION

4–8 SEPTEMBER 2023

INTRODUCTION



Northern Spain, The Basque Country, Cantabria and La Rioja (between the Camino Francés and the Camino del Norte)

The ‘Google Maps’ figure above shows the bay of Biscay Atlantic coastline of Spain from the border with France (the yellow outline in the upper right of the figure) to the palaeolithic caves of [*Altamira*](#) in the Spanish province of Cantabria. Two ancient and well-trodden pilgrim ways (the Camino Francés (green) and the Camino del Norte (magenta)) lead westward to the shrine of Saint James ([*James the apostle*](#), the great, son of Zebedee and brother of the apostle John) in the city of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. These paths enclose the Basque (Euskera speaking) region of Spain and the wine growing area of La Rioja. Both the Camino Francés and Camino del Norte are [*Unesco Heritage sites*](#) and traverse several of the important historical locations that define the early history of the Iberian peninsula ([*San Millán Yuso and Suso Monasteries \(La Rioja\)*](#)). We propose tours to some of these sites during this reunion.

The city of [*Bilbao*](#) is the largest and most populous city in Northern Spain and the Spanish Atlantic coast. It was founded in 1300 by Don Diego López V de Haro and initially thrived as a port for the export of wool and iron commodities. The old town of Bilbao (Casco Viejo) lies on the Camino del Norte pilgrim route. The cathedral dedicated to Saint James in the centre of the old town was and is an important stop for pilgrims. Formerly industrial, the city centre (Abandoibarra) has been extended and transformed over the last thirty years into a vibrant open area with imposing modern architecture, green spaces, walkways along the Nervión river, art galleries, bars and restaurants.

The 2023 Schlumberger Alliance Reunion will be based in the 5* Hotel Carlton in the centre of Bilbao. Its sister hotel the 4* Hotel Abando, located close to the Nervión river and the

Casco Viejo, is 500 m from the Hotel Carlton. Both hotels are close to concentrations of restaurants and pintxos (tapas) bars; for the Carlton on Diputazio Kalea and around Arriquirar Plaza, and, for the Abando on Ibáñez de Bilbao Kalea and Colón de Larreátegui Kalea (which are both in front of the hotel) and on Ledesma Musikariaren Kalea (the street behind the hotel). In the Casco Viejo the places to go are the Plaza Nueva and the Erribera Market on the river bank.

However there is more to do in Bilbao than eating and drinking. We have arranged walking tours of the city, with options to visit the Guggenheim museum or the fine arts museum, on the first day of the reunion, and, excursions to nearby regions of interest for the second, third and final day.

The wine growing area of La Rioja is home to over 5,000 vineyards and stretches along the Ebro river from Haro (the principal town of the Rioja Alta) to Logroño (the principal town of the Rioja Baja). We will be visiting Laguardia (the principal town of the Rioja Alavesa), a mediaeval town on a hill surrounded by bodegas and vineyards with, to the North, the Sierra de Cantabria (Basque Mountains).

Santander was the summer home (the Magdalena Palace) of the king of Spain up until the Spanish civil war in the 1930s. It is a major port and the capital of the Cantabria province. The medieval city center was largely destroyed by fire in 1941 and has been replaced by modern buildings including the Centro Botin art gallery and the Maritime museum. The Camino del Norte also passes through Santander and continues along the Biscay coast through a number of medieval villages including Santillana del Mar which we will visit on the Santander tour. Nearby Santillana del Mar is the cave complex of [Altamira](#). Access to the cave complex is nowadays very restricted. The Altamira museum close to the cave entrance contains a recreation of the cave and a permanent collection of objects from Altamira and other surrounding caves.

Day 0 Arrival in Bilbao, Welcome Cocktail in the Hotel Carlton

Schlumberger Alliance - Bilbao Reunion September 4th to 8th 2023													
Time	Monday September 4th	Tuesday September 5th				Wednesday September 6th		Thursday September 7th		Friday September 8th			
07:00-08:00											Free time to explore Bilbao		
08:00-09:00		Guggenheim Museum	Fine Arts Museum	Bilbao Centre	Casco Viejo	Santander Tour	La Rioja Tour	Santander Tour	La Rioja Tour	GOLF		Urdaibai Tour	
09:00-10:00													
10:00-11:00													
11:00-12:00													
12:00-13:00													
13:00-14:00												e.g. Vizcaya Bridge	
14:00-15:00													San Juan de Gaztelatube, Nervion river, Restaurants and Guernica
15:00-16:00												Boat tour on Bermeo and	
16:00-17:00	Hotel Registration												Guernica
17:00-18:00		Business Meeting Azul Room, Hotel Carlton											
18:00-19:00													
19:00-20:00	Welcome Cocktail Cristalera Room Hotel Carlton												
20:00-21:00													
21:00-22:00		Cocktail Dinner	Cristalera Room, Hotel Carlton	Imperial Room, Hotel Carlton					Dinner in private dining club Sociedad Bilbaina 1839				
22:00-23:00													
23:00-24:00													

Schedule for the Bilbao reunion, walking tours and excursions to Santander, La Rioja and Urdaibai will depart from the Carlton hotel

Day 1 Walking Tours, Business Meeting and Gala Dinner



Places of interest in the centre of Bilbao

[Tourisme Euskadi- Bilbao](#)



Views of Bilbao (Casco Viejo (seven streets, cathedral, plaza nueva) and Guggenheim)

Guggenheim Museum

[Guggenheim Bilbao Museum \(\[guggenheim-bilbao.eus\]\(http://guggenheim-bilbao.eus\)\)](#)

[Guggenheim effect: how the museum helped transform Bilbao](#)

The construction of the Guggenheim museum in 1997 transformed the former industrial area of Bilbao. It is one largest museums in Spain and features both permanent exhibitions of modern art and visiting exhibitions. The walking tour inside the museum features many of the major works in the museum, while the walking tour of Ensanche and Abandoibara (below) incorporates the setting of the museum and the architectural transformation of the area around it. Visitors often spend many days exploring the Guggenheim museum and there will be time on Friday to make a return visit (the Guggenheim museum is closed on Mondays).

Fine Arts Museum

[Bilbao Fine Arts Museum \(bilbaomuseoa.eus\)](http://bilbaomuseoa.eus)

The Bilbao Fine Arts Museum is the second largest and most visited museum in the Basque Country, after the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum and one of the richest Spanish museums outside Madrid. It houses a valuable and quite comprehensive collection of Basque, Spanish and European art from the Middle Ages to contemporary, including paintings by old masters like El Greco, Cranach, Sofonisba Anguissola, Murillo, Goya, Luis Paret, Van Dyck, Ruisdael and Bellotto, together with 19th century and modern: Gustave Doré, Sorolla, Mary Cassatt, Paul Gauguin, Henri Le Sidaner, James Ensor, Jacques Lipchitz, Peter Blake, Francis Bacon and Richard Serra.

Walking tour of Ensanche and Abandoibarra

[The world showcase of architecture](#)

The rebuilding of the centre of Bilbao (Abandoibarra) is show-cased in this walking tour featuring many of the iconic buildings, bridges and squares. The expansion (Ensanche) of the city started in the late nineteenth century with a move from the old town across the Nervión river into Abando. The early stage of urban renewal resulted in the planning of an with an elliptical square, Federico [Moyúa Square](#) (directly in front of the Carlton Hotel), as the geographical centre, crossed by an avenue 30 meters wide, the [Gran Vía de Don Diego López de Haro](#). Later developments filled the area between the Gran Vía and the river with modern buildings including the Guggenheim museum.

Walking tour of the old town (Casco Viejo)

[Casco Viejo \(the old town - siete calles\)](#)

The old town of Bilbao features narrow streets, large open squares, museums and a number of religious buildings including the Cathedral dedicated to Saint James the greater (Iago). The top shopping streets in this historical centre are Ascao, Correos, Bidebarrieta, Víctor and Somera. The bars and restaurants are concentrated in the so-called "seven streets" which are the heart of the Casco Viejo: Somera, Artecalle, Tendería, Belosticalle, Carnicería Vieja, Barrencalle and Barrencalle Barrena. The Erribera market on the river front is the largest produce market in Europe and together with the Plaza Nueva offers one of the best and most diverse choice of pintxo bars and restaurants.

Business meeting in the Hotel Carlton

Azul room on floor -1 (4pm to 6pm).

Gala Dinner in the Hotel Carlton

Cocktails in the Cristalera room on the ground floor, followed by dinner in the adjoining Imperial room (cocktails will be served at 8pm).

Days 3 and 4 Excursions to Cantabria and La Rioja, Day 5 Excursion to Urdaibai

La Rioja



[The Rioja wine region](#)

[Rioja Alta \(Haro\), Rioja Alavesa \(Laguardia\)](#)

[Villa Lucía in Rioja Alavesa \(villa-lucia.com\)](#)

The Rioja wine region has over 5,000 vineyards stretched along the upper Ebro valley. It is split into three main areas: the Rioja Alta centred around the town of Haro, the Rioja Baja (now called the Rioja Oriental) centred around Logroño and the Rioja Alavesa on the left bank of the Ebro centred on the town of Laguardia. The red wines of Rioja are traditionally made principally with Tempranillo grapes and aged in oak barrels, the aging times are used as a measure of quality with the grading of Roble, Crianza, Reserva and Gran Reserva indicating progressively longer times exposed to oak. Young innovative winemakers, especially in the Rioja Alavesa, are deviating from the traditional wine-making methods and producing high quality fresh wines without the standard quality gradings. The Rioja excursion will travel to Laguardia and the vineyard of Villa Lucia, the group will be divided into three and focus on three activities to be examined in turn. The activities are: an explanation of wine-making methods in the Rioja Alavesa; a visit to the Fabulista Winery; and, a visit to the medieval town of Laguardia. These visits will be followed by lunch at Villa Lucia.

Cantabria



Maremondo restaurant, Santillana del Mar, Altamira, Maritime Museum

[Santander](#)

[Altamira cave and museum](#)

The Santander tour will start with a walking tour of the different areas of the city including the port, the beaches around the bay and the beaches of the Biscay (Atlantic) coast this will be followed by lunch at the [Maremondo restaurant](#) overlooking the Sardinero beach. In the afternoon a bus will take the group to [Santillana del Mar](#) and the museum of [Altamira](#) which is nearby.

Day 4 Dinner at the Sociedad Bilbaina 1839:

[Photographs of the club](#)

The Sociedad Bilbaina is a private club founded in 1839 as a recreational and cultural society. It is renowned also for its fine dining. A four course meal (appetizer, first and second courses, and dessert) with wine has been arranged for the Alliance on Thursday 7th September at 7pm (19:00). The club building on Calle Navarra no.1 is arranged on several floors and consist of meeting rooms, libraries, sporting facilities, kitchens, restaurants and two bars. Although it was occupied and looted by nationalist troops during the Spanish civil war, it has been restored to its original glory.

Day 5 Optional activities:

The last day of the reunion (Friday 8th May) may be the date of departure for many, however for others there is time for several activities in the Bilbao area, either in small groups or your own, or in an organised tour we are planning to the Urdaibai biosphere. Urdaibai is a river estuary downstream of Guernica which leads to the resort of Mundaka and the port of Bermeo on the Biscay coast. Bermeo was supplanted by Bilbao as the major port in this part of Spain but is still important for its fishing industry which supplies Bilbao and other major towns in the Spanish Basque region

Day 5 Self-organised activities

[Golf at Uraburu](#)

The Uraburu golf course designed by José María Olazabal overlooks Bilbao and is a 20 minute car-ride from the city centre.

Alternatively you might organize your own [Boat tour](#); [Bicycle rental](#), a longer visit to the [Guggenheim museum](#), or visit the [Vizcaya bridge](#) (access from Getxo (North side of the Nervión river) or Portugalete (on the South side) there are bus, metro and train links).

Organised tour to Urdaibai

Excursion to the Urdaibai estuary, Bermeo, [San Juan de Gaztelugatxe](#) and [Guernica](#)

This 8hr trip (9:00-17:00 8th September) follows the Nervión river from the city centre to the port of Getxo. The Vizcaya bridge is a transporter bridge linking Getxo to Portugalete on the South side of the river, it allowed large ships to travel upstream into the old and new city centres. From the bridge the trip follows the headland to the Urdaibai estuary. There is a viewpoint to the island of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe (castle on the rock) and its monastery. The island is now known by some as Dragonstone which was used in the filming of the "Game of Thrones" television series. The tour then proceeds to Bermeo, Mundaka and Guernica. Guernica is the historical and spiritual capital of the Basque country and became infamous after the German/Italian bombing of the town on the orders of General Francisco Franco. [Picasso's painting](#) inspired by the aftermath of the bombing, in which 1600 civilians were wounded or killed, now hangs in the Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid. A tiled wall in Guernica town displays a full-size reproduction of the painting. A sit down lunch will be provided.