



A purple heron.

The Mundaka estuary stands at the centre of the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve and is a truly exceptional area.

We are now in the valley of the Oka river, the main population of which is Gernika, where we will also find a series of smaller, country villages and delightful scenery.

On the coast, to the east of the estuary, is cape Ogoño, an impressive limestone bulk which provides shelter for the shag and the peregrine falcon. At its feet is Laga beach which, despite its popularity with swimmers, still preserves valuable specimens of the extremely special psammophyte flora (typical of sandy areas and dunes).

In front of the estuary is the solitary Island of Izaro, an outstanding element on the landscape, which is moreover home to an important nesting colony of yellow-legged gulls, in addition to the recently installed colony of common egret.

We should now stop on the Mundaka estuary itself which, as we said above, stands at the heart of the Reserve. We recommend that you visit it at different times of the day in order to enjoy the scenery at both high and low tides. The two roads leaving from Gernika, one towards Bermeo and the other towards Laga-Elantxobe, run along opposite banks of the estuary and therefore allow us to admire virtually all of the area. The views from the either bank of the estuary are also lovely.

Low tide uncovers enormous stretches of beach, including that of Laida, near the mouth, and which are later covered as the tide comes in. Upstream, from the same road, and particularly from Gautegiz-Arteaga to Kanala, there is a fairly good view of the marshlands which, with their several furrows, loamy soil (visible at low tide) and vast reedbeds, comprise a habitat of exceptional ecological value within the environment of the Bay of Biscay as a whole. This area plays an extremely important part in the migratory route of aquatic birds, some of which are particularly endangered, such as the spoonbill. This said, we can nevertheless catch sight of groups of birds on the marshlands the whole year round: sandpipers, anatides, birds of prey such as the osprey, warblers, herons, terns, seagulls, divers, rails, kingfishers, etc. The month of September, in

A yellow-legged gull.



full autumn migration, is however one of the best times to observe the different ornithological species offered to us by the estuary.

If we take a look from the estuary at the surrounding landscape, our eyes will tend to particularly settle on the right bank (Atxarre-Ereñozar), on a series of contours bearing tightly packed, dark green vegetation. These are limestone ridges covered with the Cantabrian holm oak at all of its different stages of growth. This typically Mediterranean vegetation (right on the Atlantic coast) has decided to stay here, as it has done in other areas, due to having taken root in the rocky, dry ground that is no use whatsoever for agriculture. The caves created in this area by the dissolution of the limestone, were used by prehistoric hunters as houses. One of these caves is Santimamiñe, in the municipality of Kortezubi, home to a magnificent example of cave painting depicting the animals they hunted. Many other caves contain material (bones, tools) left behind by their inhabitants.



TO KEEP YOURSELF BUSY

Itineraries:

Ecological-cultural itineraries in the Urdaibai reserve.

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Water activities

Diving, surf, sailing and boat trips on the estuary, to Izaro Island and to Elantxobe via the Ogoño caves.

Find out more at the Gernika Tourist Office. Tel.: 94.625.58.92

Adventure sport:

Abseiling, rock-climbing, pot-holing, canoeing, archery, hill-walking, mountaineering, orienteering, rafting, mountain biking, etc.

These are just some of the activities that will make your visit to Urdaibai one to remember.

*Find out more at:
NATURLAN 94.430.46.57
UR 2000 94.479.06.56
KIRIK 94.491.17.46
LURRASKA 94.625.72.45*

URDATBAI



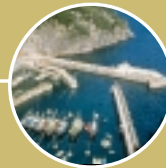
The mouth of the Gernika Estuary between Cape Ogoño (left) and Mundaka (right).

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Classification	<i>Biosphere Reserve</i>
Municipalities	<i>Sukarrieta, Ajangiz, Arratzu, Gernika-Lumo, Murueta, Mundaka, Kortezubi, Gautegiz-Arteaga, Forua, Elantxobe, Muxika, Nabarniz, Ereño, Munitibar-Arbatzegi-Gerrikaitz, Morga, Ibarregelu, Errigoiti, Busturia, Bermeo, Arrieta, Zornotza, Mendata.</i>
Area covered	<i>23,000 ha.</i>
Height	<i>The highest point is Astogana (809 m)</i>
How to get there	<i>By the A-8, taking the Amorebieta-Etxano turn off and from there by the BI-635 through the Reserve from south to north via Gernika and as far as Bermeo.</i>
Information	<i>Urdabai Reserve Patronato: Tel.: 94.625.71.25</i>



NOT TO BE MISSED...



El antxobe

The houses of this picturesque population with its intense seafaring flavour literally hang from the hillside and make their way down as far as the harbour.



GERNIKA CASA DE JUNTAS (Assembl y House)

The meetings of the Juntas Generales (General Assemblies) and the oath-taking ceremonies at which Fueros or chapters were granted by the Lord of Bizkaia were held in the shade of the symbolic oak tree. These Juntas Generales were subsequently recovered in 1979, and meetings are still held to this day.



OMA FOREST

Located in the municipality of Kortezubi, this magical forest establishes a new relationship between nature and art. On painting hundreds of pine trees with colour and life, the artist Augustin Ibarrola has created an enormous canvas which visitors can rearrange at will by playing with the different perspectives while walking through the trees.



BERMEO (Museo del Pescador)

Located in the fortified tower of the Ercilla ancestral home, the Museo del Pescador takes visitors through the region's fishing history, showing them the techniques and tools used in the different periods.



SANTIMAMIÑE CAVES

The paintings on the walls of these caves, which are open to the public, are some of the most interesting in Europe.