

ON FOOT

Bilbao: Much more than the Guggenheim

Busy streets, lively shopping precincts, gardens and squares on either side of the estuary. Bilbao is a capital that quite obviously offers the visitor far more than just the famous

Next, we'll make our way into the *Casco Viejo* past the church of San Nicolás de Bari before the Calle Correo brings us out onto the Neo-classical PLAZA NUEVA with its 64 porticoed arches, bars with lively

the "Portada del Angel" before losing yourself in the boisterous bars of the Siete Calles, coming back out again at the estuary next to the CHURCH OF SAN ANTON, on which you'll see the borough's coat of arms, and the MERCADO DE LA RIBERA.

capital's most important banking and shopping district. Stop in front of the building housing the DIPUTACIÓN FORAL DE BIZKAIA and in the large Plaza Moyua, also known as the Plaza Elíptica.



Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.

Let's start our tour in the hectic PLAZA DE ESPAÑA, also known as the Plaza Circular. Making our way down the Calle Buenos Aires will bring us to the backbone of the city, the estuary. Crossing the bridge, we can observe a building with its own personality, the AYUNTAMIENTO, or Town Hall.

Turning to the right will take us to the ARENAL gardens where the locals love to meet and do all sorts of activities.

terraces and Sunday street market.

Across the square, in the Calle de la Cruz, is the MUSEO ARQUEOLOGICO, ETNOLOGICO E HISTORICO VASCO, home to a collection of objects and tools used by the Basques since prehistory.

Very near here, by now in the *Siete Calles* of the original old quarter, is SANTIAGO CATHEDRAL, an excellent example of Bizkaian Gothic architecture. Stop at the doorway known as

Make your way back through the area until coming to the Calle Bidebarrieta, the street leading to the majestic TEATRO ARRIAGA as it glistens beside the estuary. Crossing the constantly busy Puente del Arenal will bring us back to the Plaza de España. Before heading down the Gran Vía, stop for a rest at the relaxing ALBIA GARDENS, presided over by the chronicler Antonio de Trueba, or have something to drink in the ancient Iruña café.

The GRAN VIA, dedicated to Don Diego López de Haro, but given this shorter name by the locals, is the

From the Gran Vía you can access DOÑA CASILDA PARK, where you'll find a bandstand often used for open-air festive activities. This park, Bilbao's breath of fresh air, serves as the entrance to the MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES, and its excellent art collection.

At the bottom of the Alameda de Rekalde you'll be met by Puppy, the cute, flower-coated mascot of the GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO, where you can end your stroll, either by visiting the building or by enjoying the area surrounding it. Gehry's construction stands on the opposite side of the estuary from Deusto University.



FOUNDER. Say hello to Diego López de Haro, Lord of Bizkaia, whose statue stands in the Plaza de España. This man founded the borough of Bilbao in 1300.



DIFFERENT. Eclectic with a curious central spire, Bilbao's Town Hall building is quite unusual. Receptions held in this building take place in the exotic Arab lounge.



PREHISTORIC. "Mikeldi", an idol of uncertain origin, is to be found in the Museo Arqueológico, the ideal place to learn a bit about Basque ethnography.



THEATRICAL. The centre of the local cultural life, if the modern Euskalduna auditorium doesn't mind me saying so, the Teatro Arriaga was inspired by the Paris Opera.



MUDEJAR. The decoration of the Iruña café, one of the city's classics. Other cafés with an atmosphere of yesteryear yet still at the centre of local social life are El Boulevard and La Granja.



REVISITED. The Guggenheim boom has served to entice a number of people back to the veteran Museo de Bellas Artes, with its selection of paintings from different schools.

