

BAHIA DE LA CONCHA / THE CONCHA BAY: From Chillida to Oteiza

La Concha (The Shell) Bay is one of the most beautiful promenades of Spain. For many years it was the favourite place of the Spanish monarchy and the European aristocracy. The promenade crosses along two beaches: Ondarreta and La Concha (from left to right) separated by a rock formation called Pico del Loro (Parrot's Peak). The distance, over three Kilometres, can be made along the avenue or through the beach. Note that Pico del Loro cannot be crossed except with low tide.



The Path starts in *El Peine de los Vientos* (*The Comb of the Winds*), the most famous sculpture by local sculptor Eduardo Chillida. The civil works of the ensemble were made by Architect Luis Peña Ganchegui, who was Professor at the Faculty of Architecture of San Sebastián.

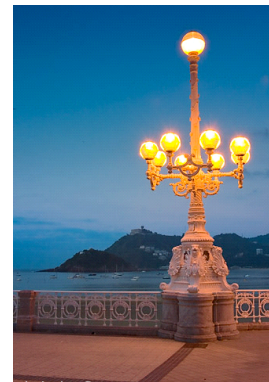
The ensemble changes depending on the behaviour of sea. The platform over the sculpture has seven holes. The waves crashing over the wall enter through those holes producing the seven musical notes and expelling seawater violently.



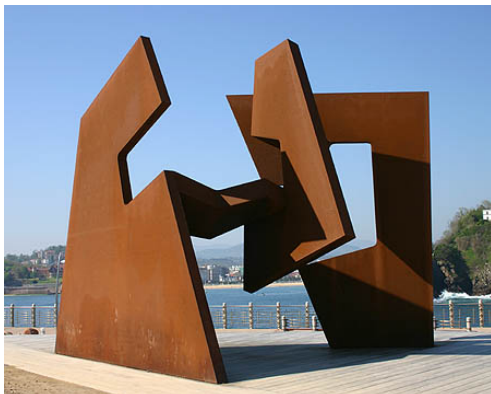
Over Pico del Loro you will find the Miramar Palace. It is a Palace of British style, old residence of the Spanish Royal Family. The gardens are open to the public and deserve the best views of the bay.



In the avenue, near Miramar Palace, there is a beautiful sculpture by Eduardo Chillida named *Homenaje a Fleming (Homage to Fleming)*. Along the avenue you will find some of the most remarkable symbols of San Sebastián: the balustrade and the streetlamps.



The walk finishes in the beginning of the Paseo Nuevo, where you will find the impressive sculpture *Construcción Vacía (Empty Construction)*, by local sculptor Jorge Oteiza. He is also remarkable for his decision in 1959 to stop working as a sculptor after he had achieved his formal and conceptual goals. Only after his death many of his small sculptures were reproduced at higher scales, like this one. During their life, Chillida and Oteiza maintained bitter discussions, both in the personal and artistic plane.

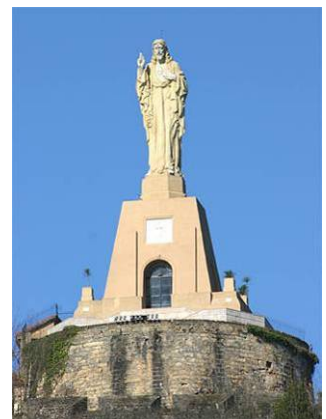


Mount Urgull is placed close to the old quarter of San Sebastián. It is a perfect place to get a complete view of the city. With Mount Higueldo (left part of the bay) and Mount Ulia (right part of the city) is one of the three mountains that surround the city.

There are four ways to enter in Urgull, marked with red arrows in the picture above. As you climb you may feel lost, but don't worry. There are many paths that intersect and finally, after reaching the top, you will easily find an exit through any of the four accesses.



Mount Urgull is easy to explore, with nice views and beautiful gardens. It was the ancient fortress of the city and you will find there many defensive buildings, cannons, strongholds and a XIIth century castle topped with a giant sculpture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Feel free to move randomly, but one example of a 3 Km. tour is the following:



At the feet of Urgull there is a fishermen harbour with some fish restaurants. The road of the Harbour finishes in the Paseo Nuevo, a nice avenue surrounding Mount Urgull, where the citizens of San Sebastian like to walk. If you notice that the floor is wet and the Cantabrico Sea is brave, you should take care of the waves, some of them might appear unexpectedly with a height of several metres.



The Urumea River divides San Sebastián in two parts, leaving in the right place the third beach of the city: Zurriola. It is the favourite of young people and one of the best places in Europe to practice surf.



There are many remarkable buildings in the mouth of Urumea River like Victoria Eugenia Theatre or Maria Cristina Hotel. But the last architectural treasure of the city is the Kursaal Auditorium by Architect Rafael Moneo. Moneo has received the Pritzker Prize (The Nobel of Architecture) and the Mies van der Rohe Award for the best European building in 2001 amongst other prizes.

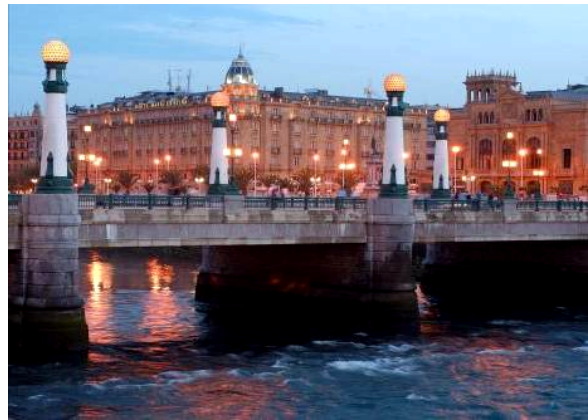


The Kursaal lies on a corner of Zurriola Beach, Moneo found his inspiration for the design of the complex in the large, two-cubic-meter stone blocks that were used as jetties and breakwaters at the mouth of the river. As opposed to the jetty blocks, his two building volumes are not especially rectangular, but lean three degrees in relation to the horizontal plane, and five degrees to the vertical. Visually, the two dynamic main forms seem to be repelling each other, but the glass cubes harmonize nicely with the general building height of about twenty meters, just as the greenish translucent glass facades match in colour the nearby river water perfectly.

The City Centre is divided in two parts: the Romantic Part, simply called The Centre (El Centro) and The Old Part (Parte Vieja). The Boulevard divide both parts and constitutes the neuralgic centre of the city, featuring the City Hall. It is also the meeting point for many citizens of San Sebastián and the best place to start any visit for the city.



Many buildings of the zone have architectural interest. A tour should cover the Plaza del Buen Pastor and the NeoGothic Cathedral with the same name, the bridges over the Urumea River, the Alderdi Eder Gardens with the City Hall and the zone around Plaza Gipuzkoa, including Theatre Victoria Eugenia and Hotel Maria Cristina belonging to the Belle Époque of San Sebastián.



In the old part the highlight is the bars and restaurants with the famous pintxos of San Sebastián, authentic gastronomic jewels in miniature. Street 31 de Agosto and the surroundings of Plaza Constitución, formerly used as bullring, are the best places to taste some pintxos and drinks. The Church of Santa María with the sculpture of San Sebastián in its façade and a beautiful cross by Eduardo Chillida in the interior and the Monastery of San Telmo, today a museum, are the best heritage buildings of the zone.

