

Discovering the Hidden Gems of Bidart: A Travel Guide

Nestled between the vibrant towns of Biarritz and Saint-Jean-de-Luz on the Basque Country coast lies Bidart, a charming village that promises a blend of stunning landscapes, rich history, and unique cultural experiences. My recent trip to Bidart offered an unforgettable mix of relaxation, adventure, and culinary delights. Whether you're planning your next holiday or just dreaming of future travels, let me take you through the highlights of my stay in this enchanting destination.

Where We Stayed: Comfort and Charm at Hotel Itsas Mendia

Our home base for the trip was the beautiful Hotel Itsas Mendia, a boutique hotel that perfectly captures the essence of Basque hospitality. Located just a short walk from the beach, the hotel boasts breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean and the surrounding countryside. The rooms are tastefully decorated with a mix of modern comforts and traditional Basque elements, providing a cozy retreat after a day of exploration.

The staff at Hotel Itsas Mendia went above and beyond to ensure our stay was perfect, offering personalized recommendations and even arranging activities for us. Their warmth and attentiveness made us feel truly welcome.

What to Do in Bidart

1. Beach Bliss at Plage du Centre

Bidart is home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the region, and Plage du Centre quickly became our favorite. This expansive sandy beach is perfect for sunbathing, swimming, and water sports. If you're a surf enthusiast, the waves here are ideal for both beginners and seasoned surfers. We spent countless hours enjoying the sun, sea, and sand, and even took a surf lesson from a local instructor.

2. Explore the Old

Discovering Bidart: A Hidden Gem on the Basque Coast

Located in the picturesque Basque Country in southwestern France, Bidart is an idyllic coastal village that perfectly blends rustic charm and modern attractions. As someone who recently had the pleasure of spending a week in Bidart, I can say that this charming locale offers much more than just stunning beaches. Whether you are an adventurer, a history buff, or someone looking to relax and rejuvenate, Bidart has something special in store.

Where I Stayed

During my stay in Bidart, I chose to lodge at **Hôtel Itsas Mendia**, a boutique hotel that embodies the elegance and tranquility of the Basque region. Nestled perfectly between the lush hills and the azure ocean, the hotel's location couldn't have been better. Each morning, I was greeted with the breathtaking view of the Atlantic Ocean from my room's balcony. The rooms were exquisitely decorated, blending traditional Basque elements with modern amenities.

The staff at Hôtel Itsas Mendia were incredibly welcoming and knowledgeable, offering great recommendations on local activities and eateries. One of the highlights was their breakfast—a delicious spread featuring fresh pastries, local cheeses, and an assortment of fruits, perfect to fuel a day of exploration.

What to Do in Bidart

1. Hit the Beaches

Bidart's beaches are undeniably its biggest draw. **Plage du Centre** is the most accessible and lively beach, perfect for families and surf enthusiasts. The golden sands and rolling waves make it an excellent spot for sunbathing, swimming, and surfing. Beginners can take lessons at one of the surf schools lining the shore. For those seeking a quieter experience, **Plage de l'Uhabia** offers a more secluded setting surrounded by mesmerizing cliffs and rock formations.

2. Explore the Old Town

The old town of Bidart is a treasure trove of Basque culture and history. Wandering its narrow streets, you'll encounter traditional half-timbered houses, charming local shops, and historic landmarks like the **Saint Mary's Church**. This 16th-century church, with its majestic bell tower and intricate wooden interiors, offers a glimpse into the region's rich heritage.

3. Enjoy the Culinary Delights

Bidart is a haven for food lovers. From Michelin-starred restaurants to quaint bistros, the dining options are plentiful and diverse. One evening, I dined at **Les Frères Ibarboure**, a Michelin-starred restaurant that offers a delightful fusion of traditional Basque cuisine and modern culinary techniques. Each dish was a work of art, prepared with locally sourced ingredients. Don't miss trying the **pintxos**, a Basque version of tapas, at one of the local bars. These small bites are packed with flavor and are perfect for a light, casual meal.

4. Hike the Coastal Paths

For outdoor enthusiasts, the coastal hiking trails offer unparalleled views of the ocean and the rugged landscape. The **Sentier du Littoral** (Coastal Path) is a must-do. This trail stretches from Bidart to Hendaye, passing dramatic cliffs and hidden coves along the way. It's not overly challenging, making it suitable for hikers of all levels. Be sure to bring your camera as the scenery is absolutely stunning.

5. Visit the Local Markets

Immerse yourself in the local culture by visiting the nearby markets. **Halles de Biarritz** is a short drive away and offers a vibrant atmosphere with stalls selling fresh produce, cheeses, and other local specialties. It's a fantastic place to pick up some picnic supplies or unique souvenirs.

What to Do in Bidart When It Rains

Even on rainy days, Bidart is full of opportunities to enjoy and explore.

1. Discover Basque Culture at the Musée Basque

A short drive will take you to **Musée Basque et de l'Histoire de Bayonne**. This museum offers an in-depth look at the Basque culture and history, showcasing artifacts, traditional costumes, and informative exhibits. It's a great way to understand the region's unique identity.

2. Enjoy a Spa Day

Rainy days are perfect for indulging in some relaxation. The **Thalmar Spa** in Biarritz, just a short drive from Bidart, offers a range of treatments, from thalassotherapy to massages. The spa is equipped with indoor pools, saunas, and a hammam, providing a luxurious escape from the weather.

3. Take a Cooking Class

What better way to experience Basque cuisine than by learning to cook it yourself? **L'Atelier des Chefs** in Biarritz offers cooking classes where you can learn to prepare traditional Basque dishes. It's a fun and educational way to spend a rainy afternoon, and you get to enjoy a delicious meal at the end.

4. Wine Tasting

Take a trip to the nearby **Irouléguay wine region**, where you can tour vineyards and taste some of the finest wines the Basque Country has to offer. Many wineries have cozy indoor tasting rooms, making it a delightful rainy-day activity.

5. Visit the Aquarium de Biarritz

The **Aquarium de Biarritz** is another excellent indoor activity. Home to a variety of marine life, from sharks to tropical fish, the aquarium offers interactive exhibits and fascinating displays. It's an educational and entertaining way to spend a few hours.

Final Thoughts

Bidart might not be as well-known as some of its neighboring destinations, but that's part of its charm. It offers a perfect blend of natural beauty, rich culture, and modern amenities.

Whether you're basking in the sun on its pristine beaches, savoring the local cuisine, or soaking in the Basque culture, Bidart promises an unforgettable experience.

So, if you're considering a holiday in the Basque Country, don't overlook this hidden gem. Pack your bags, bring your sense of adventure, and get ready to fall in love with Bidart. And remember, rain or shine, this charming village has something special in store for everyone.

Unveiling Bidart: A Hidden Gem in the Basque Country

Nestled between the sprawling city of Biarritz and the charming town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz lies Bidart, a picturesque coastal village in the Basque Country of France. I recently had the pleasure of spending a week in this delightful locale, and let me tell you, it's a destination that should be on every traveler's radar. From stunning landscapes and rich cultural experiences to mouth-watering cuisine, Bidart offers an abundance of activities to suit every taste, come rain or shine.

The Perfect Stay: Les Frères Ibarboure Hotel

To get the most out of my visit, I stayed at Les Frères Ibarboure, a charming hotel that perfectly captures the essence of the Basque Country. The hotel is beautifully set amidst lush greenery and offers an atmosphere of peaceful elegance. Each morning, I woke up to the sounds of nature and enjoyed my coffee on the terrace, which overlooks a garden that seems almost magical.

The rooms are a blend of modern comfort and traditional Basque décor, featuring plush beds, luxurious bathrooms, and even private balconies. The hospitality was top-notch, with the staff providing attentive service that made me feel right at home. One of the highlights of my stay was dining at the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant, where I indulged in local delicacies prepared with a contemporary twist. The experience was nothing short of sublime.

What to Do in Bidart

Explore the Beaches

Bidart is home to some of the most beautiful beaches in the Basque Country. Plage du Centre is the main beach, offering golden sands and crystal-clear waters. It's perfect for sunbathing, swimming, and even surfing. The waves here cater to both beginners and seasoned surfers. For those who prefer a quieter spot, Plage d'Erretegia is a hidden gem that offers breathtaking views and a more secluded atmosphere.

Wander the Village

The village center of Bidart is a delightful mix of traditional Basque architecture and vibrant local culture. Strolling through the narrow streets, you'll encounter charming boutiques, artisan shops, and cozy cafes. Don't miss the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, a beautiful 16th-century structure that is a cornerstone of Bidart's historical heritage.

Hike the Coastal Path

One of my favorite activities was hiking along the Sentier du Littoral, a coastal path that offers stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean and the rugged Basque coastline. The trail is well-marked and relatively easy, making it accessible for hikers of all levels. Along the way, you'll encounter scenic viewpoints, hidden coves, and even opportunities for wildlife spotting. Make sure to bring your camera; the photo opportunities are endless.

Visit Local Markets

To truly immerse yourself in the local culture, visit one of Bidart's bustling markets. The weekly market held every Saturday is a sensory delight, offering everything from fresh produce and local cheeses to handmade crafts and souvenirs. It's a fantastic way to interact with locals and get a taste of the region's culinary delights.

What to Do in Bidart When It Rains

While Bidart is known for its sunny weather, it does experience the occasional rainy day. Fortunately, there's plenty to do even when the skies are gray.

Explore Basque Museums

Take a short drive to nearby Biarritz and visit the Asiatica Museum, which houses an impressive collection of Asian art, or the Sea Museum (Musée de la Mer), which offers fascinating exhibits on marine life and local maritime history. Both museums provide an enriching experience and are perfect for a rainy day.

Indulge in Spa Treatments

Bidart and its neighboring areas are home to several luxurious spas. I treated myself to a relaxing afternoon at Thalmar, a renowned thalassotherapy center in Biarritz. The treatments, which use seawater and marine products, left me feeling rejuvenated and pampered. It's a wonderful way to unwind and escape the rain.

Wine and Dine

Rainy days are the perfect excuse to indulge in the local culinary scene. Head to one of Bidart's many restaurants or cafes and savor Basque cuisine at its finest. I particularly enjoyed my meal at La Tantina de la Playa, a beachfront restaurant offering delicious seafood and stunning ocean views (even if it's through a window on a rainy day). Pair your meal with a glass of local wine, and you've got the makings of a perfect day.

Cooking Classes

For a hands-on experience, consider taking a Basque cooking class. Many local chefs offer classes where you can learn to prepare traditional dishes like pintxos (Basque tapas) and gâteau Basque (a delicious pastry). It's a fun and educational way to spend a rainy afternoon, and you get to enjoy the fruits of your labor at the end.

Local Art Galleries

Bidart is also home to several art galleries showcasing local talent. Spend some time exploring these creative spaces, where you can admire and even purchase unique pieces of Basque art. It's a great way to support local artists and bring a piece of Bidart home with you.

Conclusion

From its stunning beaches and vibrant village life to its rich cultural heritage and delectable cuisine, Bidart is a destination that has something for everyone. Whether you're basking in the sunshine or seeking shelter from the rain, there's no shortage of activities to keep you entertained and engaged.

So pack your bags and set off on an adventure to Bidart. I promise you won't be disappointed. And who knows? You might just find yourself falling in love with this charming Basque village, just as I did.

Happy travels!