



Deusto

**Centro Internacional
de Español - CIDE**

Facultad de Ciencias
Sociales y Humanas



Useful Pre-Departure Information

UNIVERSITY OF DEUSTO – BILBAO

The Basque Country and Bilbao

The Basque Country



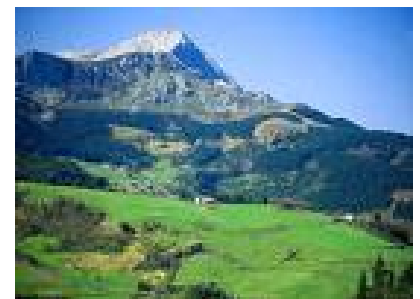
The Autonomous Community of the Basque Country is located in the easternmost part of the Gulf of Biscay. It has a surface of 7,234 km² (2,793 mi²) and a population exceeding 2 million people. Vitoria-Gasteiz is its capital city, and it has two official languages: Spanish and Basque.

The Basque Country enjoys a high per-capita income. Services are a major feature of the Basque economy, but it has a century-old industrial tradition, focused mainly on steel factories and shipyards, which have made the region highly competitive in European markets.



The Basque Autonomous Community enjoys a high degree of self-government under the Basque Government and Parliament. It also has a Basque police force, its own Basque broadcasting service, and treasury departments with their own tax systems. It can also make its own decisions regarding health, education, housing, and cultural issues, among others.

The Basque Country is organized in three provinces: Vizcaya (Bizkaia), Guipúzcoa (Gipuzkoa) and Alava (Araba). The capital cities of those provinces are Bilbao (Bilbo), San Sebastián (Donostia), and Vitoria (Gasteiz), respectively.



For more information on the Basque Country and the province of Biscay, you can check the following website: <https://tourism.euskadi.eus/en/>

Bilbao and the University of Deusto

[Bilbao](#), capital city of the province of [Biscay](#), is one of the largest cultural and economic centers in northern of Spain. With a population of some 400.000 people and a large metropolitan area, the former industrial city of Bilbao has become a modern city of services that is mainly concerned with the wellbeing of citizens and visitors alike.



The city was awarded the “Nobel Prize for Cities” at the World Cities Summit 2010 in Singapore for its spectacular process of urban transformation, and was named **European City of the Year** at the 2018 Urbanism Awards, which are based not only on urbanism, but also on other areas: environment, innovation, management style, and social and identity aspects.

Bilbao is now living a fascinating moment of creative activity, symbolized by the [Guggenheim Museum](#), which was inaugurated in 1997.



University of Deusto Library

The Guggenheim represents the transformation of the city, but it is just a small part of a wider picture. This and other singular buildings in the city, such as the subway (metro), the Isozaki towers, the [University of Deusto library](#) by Moneo, [Azkuna Zentroa or Alhóndiga](#), by Philippe Starck, or the [airport](#), by Calatrava, have made Bilbao a subject matter in Architecture schools.

It is also the city with the largest concentration of Pritzker Prizes and works by renown people by square meter. The Guggenheim is, above all, a symbol that has allowed institutions and spaces in the old city to be rediscovered and relaunched: the Old Quarter, the [Fine Arts Museum](#), [Arriaga Theater](#)...



Fine Arts Museum



Arriaga Theater

The range of cultural and leisure activities in Bilbao is rich and varied. Events such as drama, music, cinema, dance, talks, exhibits, and popular festivals in towns around stimulate social life in the city.

The good amount of hotels and restaurants that have opened up their doors in the last years are a reflection of the popularity of Bilbao among visitors, eager to enjoy the art, the history, the nearby beaches, the multiple shopping possibilities for all budgets, and Basque cuisine, internationally acclaimed for its high quality.



Pintxos at a bar in Bilbao



La Ribera Marketplace

The climate in the Basque Country is wet oceanic on the coast, and continental inland. The temperatures are mild throughout the year, with more frequent rain in the spring and fall, mild winters, and summers which are not excessively hot.

There are several beaches close to Bilbao accessible by metro. The closest one where one can swim is Ereaga, about 25 minutes away by metro; Sopela, about 35 minutes by metro (good for surfers); and Plentzia, at the end of the metro line (45 minutes), which is the best one for swimmers.



Plentzia Beach



The [University of Deusto](#) is located in the city center of Bilbao, in an exceptional area right across the Guggenheim Museum and [Euskalduna Conference Center and Concert Hall](#). Since its foundation as a private university, it has played a leading role, especially in the areas of Business Economics and Law.

The University of Deusto is considered one of the most prestigious universities in Spain. It enjoys an excellent location, just opposite the Guggenheim-Bilbao Museum, in the city center. It has a long-standing tradition of excellence in teaching and research.



The main goal of the University of Deusto is to offer good quality teaching in different areas of knowledge: from modern languages to engineering. Every year it is host to hundreds of students from all over the world who join its academic life through exchange programs or other programs specifically designed for them. It offers students the chance to experience the lifestyle and learn the culture of a Spanish speaking country.

For all this, as well as for its strategic location - most convenient to travel both within Spain and to other European countries - and for the possibilities of actual immersion offered to people who truly wish to experience local language and culture, Bilbao is a perfect place for those seeking to participate in an international study abroad experience.



Old Fishing Port, Getxo

You are welcome to check the following **videos on Bilbao**:



[Bilbao, Best European City 2018](#)



[Bilbao: The Fascinating Transformation](#)



[Bilbao Bizkaia Be Basque](#)

Practical Information

1. Passport and Visa



In order to travel to Spain, you need a valid passport. Your **passport** is an **extremely important** document that you should **take good care of**. We recommend that you carry your passport in a traveler's wallet inside your shirt or in a money belt. In any case, make sure it is in a safe place and under control at all times.

The expiration date of your passport should be a minimum of **six months** after your return date to the US. If that is not the case, we recommend that you check with the nearest Spanish Consulate in the U.S. and apply for a new passport A.S.A.P.

U.S. students staying for over 90 days (that is, for at least a whole semester) also need to apply for a **STUDENT VISA** at the nearest Spanish Embassy or consulate. Getting a student visa can take up to three months, so it is extremely important for you to apply for one immediately after you receive a letter from CIDE officially confirming your status as a University of Deusto student.



For information about the Spanish Embassy in Washington, D.C. and consulates in the U.S., visa issues, and other related information, please click [here](#).

IMPORTANT:

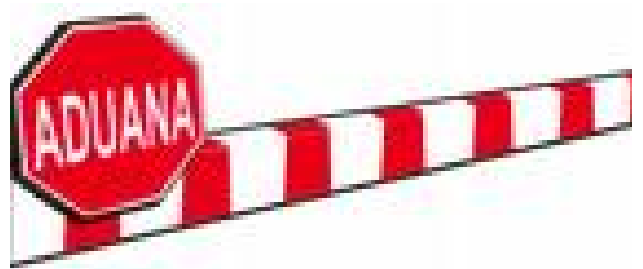
-Please notice you are responsible for finding out whether you need a visa for Spain or not. The University of Deusto will not take any responsibility if you need a visa and attempt to enter the country without one.

-You need to make sure your visa is stamped at the airport upon your arrival in Spain.



We recommend that you scan **a copy of your passport and your visa** and bring those copies with you in case you lose or misplace the original documents (in order for this measure to be effective, do not bring your passport and the copy together). You may also consider the possibility of taking a picture of it with your cell phone. The CIDE Office will also have a copy of your passport, but please notice you will not have access to those copies on weekends or during holiday periods.

If you misplace your passport or it gets stolen during your stay in Spain, you need to contact the U.S. Embassy as soon as possible. You will need to go to Madrid and apply for a new passport, which has a cost, and then, if your stay in Spain from that point on is going to be for a period longer than 3 months, you will need to go back to the U.S. and apply for a new visa.



That can indeed be a source of big headaches which you can avoid by putting your passport in a safe place and having it under control at all times.

U.S. Embassy in Madrid:

Serrano, 75
28006 Madrid
Phone#: 91-587-2200
Fax#: 91-587-2303

2. Travel Information and Registration at the U.S. Embassy



In order to prepare for your trip, we recommend that you check [the Students Abroad Website of the U.S. Department of State](#). This [Traveler's checklist](#) is also useful.

We also **recommend** that you SIGN UP for the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) at the U.S. Department of State website. Signing up is free and voluntary, and it allows the U.S. Embassy to contact you during your stay abroad should that be necessary. For more information on the benefits of registering, please check the link above.

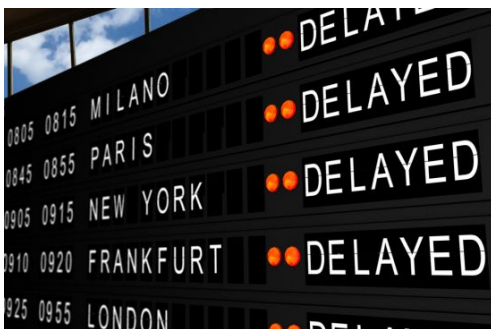
3. Your Trip to Spain and Back

• Flight Changes



Flights from the U.S. to Spain are usually long, and there are often delays and cancellations. If your flight is cancelled or you cannot make it to catch your connecting flight, and you are **re-scheduled** onto a new flight, **please let us know** as soon as you can.

Airlines and airport authorities do not release information on who is rescheduled on which flight (that information is regarded as confidential); therefore, it is important for you to **bring our contact phone numbers in your wallet**, so that you can let us know about any changes in your flights along your trip.



We recommend that you bring a **phone card** with you and some **cash** in case you need to purchase a phone card in another country different from the U.S. The official currency in Spain and the rest of the European Union is the EURO (€).

IMPORTANT:

If your flight is delayed (or canceled, try to keep calm and let us know as soon as you can). We also need to ask you to please keep calm if you need to wait a little at the airport before you are taken to your housing by a Program representative. We will truly do our best for you to get to your housing as soon as possible.

• Arriving in Spain and Airport Pick-Up

Remember you need to book a flight arriving in the BILBAO airport on the arrival date established for each program. If you are flying from the U.S., you will need to book a flight departing the day before that date.

A University of Deusto representative holding up a "Deusto" sign will be waiting at the exit of the luggage claim area to pick up those students who arrive on that day. Students staying with a host family will be picked up by their host family.



IMPORTANT: If your flight arrives in Bilbao either **earlier or later than the established arrival date** for any reason (e.g. your plane is delayed, or it is scheduled to arrive later), or you are not out of the baggage claim area by the time specified on the established arrival date, the CIDE Program **will not be able to pick you up** at the airport, so you will need to make your own arrangements to get to your housing; that is, you should take a taxi (25 euros approx., depending on location). You can take a taxi at the taxi stop at the exit of your terminal.

Please remember to bring **some cash** (in **euros!**) and **the address of your housing** with you (in your wallet or carry-on), **even if your flight is scheduled to arrive on the designated date and time**. You need to do that as a precaution measure against possible flight delays. You will be provided with your local address before your departure.



• Contacting Your Family

Families tend to worry until they learn you arrived safely, so you should make every effort to **contact your family back home as soon as possible**.

Important: Please check the "Telephone" section below for tips on how to call abroad.



When you call home or when your family and friends call you at your host home in Spain, remember there is a time difference in order to avoid waking them up or getting a phone call in the middle of the night. Time in Peninsular Spain, where Bilbao is located, is on GMT (Greenwich Meridian Time) +1, that is:

U.S. Eastern Time + 6 hours
 U.S. Central Time + 7 hours
 U.S. Mountain Time + 8 hours
 U.S. Pacific Time + 9 hours

• End of the Program

Please bear in mind **final exam dates** are official and **cannot be modified**. Therefore, please do not schedule any flight before the end date of final exams.



Please notice **the Program starts and ends in Bilbao**. If your return flight back home leaves from Madrid, you will need to make your own arrangements to get from Bilbao to Madrid in one of the following ways:

- by plane (most convenient, about 50 minutes)
- by [bus](#) (around 5 hours, good service. There is a bus that can take you from Bilbao to Terminal 4 of Madrid airport as well.)
- by [train](#)

4. Packing

When you think about what you should pack, please bear the following in mind:

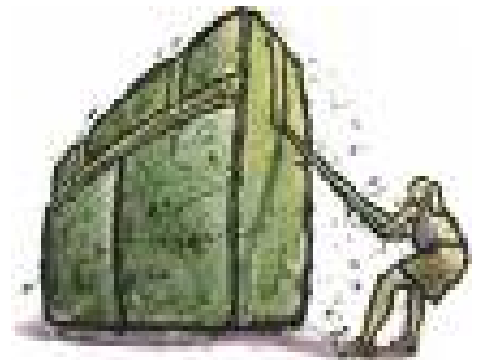
Some airlines have restrictions on the number of luggage pieces that can be checked in on international flights. You need to check with the airline you are flying with in order to find out how many pieces of luggage you can bring, and what their weight and/or size restrictions. This means you need to **think carefully before you pack**; otherwise, you might end up having to **pay extra**.



Please notice airlines have restrictions on the type of items you can put in your carry-on. All sorts of **liquids and aerosols**, for instance, are forbidden if carried in containers with a capacity of over 100 ml. If you are not sure whether the items you plan on carrying are permitted or not, we recommend that you check with your airline.

You should bear in mind you will probably buy clothes, books, presents, etc. in Spain, and you will want to bring all of your belongings (what you brought and what you purchased) back home. Mailing things is an option, but it is costly and takes a long time.

You might want to consider bringing a bag inside your suitcase in order to carry extra things with you when you return. In any case, it is a good idea to carefully plan what to put in your suitcase and to try to include just what you think is necessary.



Our recommendation: TRAVEL AS LIGHT AS POSSIBLE.



We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that your family/friends **do not send you** any goods that are not personal belongings (new clothes, computers, presents...) **by mail** while you are in Spain. Your package may be stopped by Spanish Customs in Madrid and, if that happened, you will need to go through some paperwork and pay a fee in order to get your goods (and wait for up to three or four weeks until they are released). The fee will depend on the value of the goods, but it is usually not low.

Because of all this, we highly recommend that you bring the things you will really need for the semester with you.

It is a good idea to pack a **carry-on bag** with enough things to get by for one or even several days in case your luggage does not arrive in Bilbao with you. Airlines sometimes misplace luggage pieces, and it could take days before you get them back. It is especially important for you to bring any necessary **medication** in your carry-on bag.



You may want to consider getting a **traveler's wallet** to wear under your shirt or strapped to a belt. These are particularly good for keeping credit cards and extra cash you do not need immediately.

Some suggestions on what clothing items to pack:

- Casual, comfortable clothes (jeans, T-shirts, shirts, sweaters...).
- Warm sweaters.
- At least one warm jacket and a raincoat.
- Comfortable shoes (e.g. tennis shoes; you will walk quite a lot during the orientation session, and also during your stay in Bilbao).
- Appropriate shoes for the rain.
- A pair of hiking boots (there will be many opportunities to go hiking in the area).



Europeans in general, and northern Spaniards in particular, are usually a little more formal about the way they dress than in the U.S., but it is common for students to dress casually to go to class. You will probably not need any formal dress or suit for any event.

5. Personal Expenses

As mentioned before, the EURO is the official currency in Spain and the rest of the European Union countries. Here are some tips on how to manage your money while in Spain:



- We recommend you bring a **VISA card or MasterCard**.
- Make sure you bring **cash in euros** for you to be able to get by for a while in Bilbao, preferably in **small bills**. The U.S. dollar – euro exchange rate, as all international exchange rates, tends to fluctuate all the time.



- If you plan on bringing U.S. dollars to exchange them for euros once you are in Spain, please bear in mind that exchange rates at the airport are usually not good. In general, banks are a better choice for such transactions as compared to other currency exchange services. You will be charged a fee each time you exchange money, so you may want to plan on exchanging fewer times for larger amounts. Once you are in Bilbao and need to get cash, you will get the best exchange rate at an ATM.

6. Health

In general, if you suffer from any **permanent or transitory illness or allergies**, you are under **medical treatment**, or you have ever taken (or are currently taking) **antidepressants**, you need to ask your doctor for a **report** of your last visit, which should be written within the month previous to your departure date.



If you are on a **doctor-prescribed drug** or you occasionally take it, **make sure you bring the necessary doses** for the entire time you are planning on staying abroad.

You should also get a list of the medication you regularly take signed by your doctor. You might also consider bringing common medicines with you; some of your favorite brands might not be available in Spain. You also need to bear in mind that some of the medicines that can be purchased with no prescription in a country may not be purchased without one in other countries.



All CIDE students are covered by **insurance** provided by the University of Deusto. Before the beginning of the Program, you will get your personalized policy sheet by e-mail. In general, it covers regular visits to a physician, unless those visits are related to a chronic disease or a regular checkup. As for medicines, drugs prescribed by a Spanish physician are covered.

Upon your arrival in Bilbao, you will have an orientation session where you will be provided with practical information related to the city and your stay here.

About Your Stay in Bilbao

Computers



As a CIDE student, you will have access to computers with Internet connection on campus throughout the semester.

The University of Deusto also offers **wireless access**, and therefore, most students choose to bring their laptops in order to be able to get Internet connection in classrooms, study rooms, etc. rather than only at computer rooms. We recommend that you bring your laptop with you when possible.

Telephone

Many CIDE students purchase either a cell phone or a SIM card to use with their own cell phones when they arrive in Bilbao. Many others just keep their home cell phones and stay in touch with their family and friends at home via applications such as Whatsapp or Skype using wifi connection. We recommend that you check with your service provider back home and see whether they have some sort of plan that can cover you while in Europe.



If you need to make a phone call to the U.S. from a payphone, you will need to purchase a phone card. You can get one at newsstands.

Important: If you need to make a call from a landline phone to a cellular one, please be aware of the fact that in Spain rates are considerably higher than when you call to another land line phone.

For all international calls, the access code to call from Spain is 00, followed by the country code (1 in the case of the U.S.) and telephone number.

For calling Spain from the United States, you need to dial the international access code (011) followed by the country code (34 for Spain), and then the telephone number: 01134+.



Electricity

Voltage in Spain is 220V. If you wish to bring an electric appliance with you, you should make sure it has dual (220-115) voltage. Failure to observe this may result in the burning of the appliance.

You should also be aware of the fact that European plugs are different to U.S. plugs (two-pin plug vs. three-pin plug). If you wish to bring some low-watt electric appliance, you will need a plug adapter. It can be purchased either in Spain or in the U.S.



Transportation



Bilbao, and the Basque Country in general, has excellent public transportation, including a subway, public buses, and a tramway. There is a metro (subway) station about 10-15 minutes from the University of Deusto.



The metro service is very good, new and modern, with trains running every two to five minutes at peak times. It runs until 11:00 p.m. on weekdays and Sundays, until 2:00 a.m. on Fridays, and all night on Saturdays. The bus service is also good, and the hours are the same as the metro ones (night buses are called *Gautxoris* = *Owls* in Basque).

All authorized taxis display a clear sign indicating that they are part of the public transportation service. There is a fixed minimum fare (4,00 € - 5,35 €, depending on the time of the day), plus the fare per kilometer (0,74 – 1,02). All taxis have a taximeter displaying the due amount. If any additional charges apply, they must be publically displayed..



Shopping



There are plenty of places to go shopping in Bilbao. In the Old Quarter of the city (Casco Viejo or "Las siete calles"), there are many clothing stores.

There is a mall located near the university area called [Zubiarte](#), and two big malls located close to Bilbao, [Artea](#), and [Max Center](#), where you can purchase clothes, eat, go to the movies... In downtown Bilbao there is also a seven-story department store (El Corte Inglés) where you can buy anything you need, from clothes to appliances, gifts etc.

Prices in stores are always fixed. Bargaining is not a tradition in Spain.

V.A.T. or Value Added Tax (IVA) applies to all products and services. Posted prices already include tax. In restaurants and hotels it amounts to 10%, and it is also included on posted prices unless otherwise indicated.

Non-European nationals visiting the European Union can apply for a **V.A.T. refund** for purchases over 90 €. In order to claim the V.A.T. back, the invoice of the purchase must be provided at the exports customs desk when departing from the last European Union country which has been visited.



Food



The Basque Country is famous for its [cuisine](#). Fresh and quality foods together with excellent chefs ensure unique dining experiences.

Many restaurants offer what is called *Menú del día* (three-course daily special), generally good and very reasonably priced. You can also eat "a la carta", which usually gives you more options but is more expensive. Lunch consists of one first course, one second course, dessert, bread, and a beverage. Dinner can also consist of three courses, or be lighter (an appetizer, a main course, and dessert).

There are also places where you can get fast food, and better quality fast food, such as "bocadillos" (sandwiches in baguette bread), or "tapas", which are called *pintxos* in the Basque Country (small portions of food, very popular in Spain). *Tortilla de patata* (potato omelette) is probably the most popular *pintxo* in all Spain.



In restaurants, tips are included in all prices and checks, and therefore, it is not necessary to leave any additional tip. You can leave something if you consider it appropriate in order to show your satisfaction for the service you received.

After you are admitted in the program, you will receive detailed information on courses and credits, so that you can make your course selection. Once you are in Bilbao, you will receive more academic information related to the Program.

**You will receive more information
about the city of Bilbao and
the University of Deusto
upon your arrival in Bilbao.**

**In the meantime,
you can join us in Facebook,
or follow us in Instagram:**



[/CIDE.UniversidadDeusto](https://www.facebook.com/CIDE.UniversidadDeusto)



<https://www.instagram.com/deustocide>