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AT HOME AND AWAY

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PLUS *Hotels in* YORKSHIRE, TAKE COMO *and* SAN SEBASTIÁN

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW Housing the sculpture *Hondalea*, this lighthouse is sunk into the rock of Santa Clara island. Iñigo Iriarte's eclectic store Veluto. The Old Town. Eduardo Chillida's *El Peine del Viento* (*The Wind Comb*) sculptures



Art and festivals

Eduardo Chillida's *El Peine del Viento*, the three mighty iron sculptures anchored to the rocks at the entrance to San Sebastián's bay, are its most iconic artwork from the city's – and the Basque Country's – most iconic artist. A 15-minute drive from the centre is **Chillida-Leku**, an open-air museum dedicated to his work, run by Hauser & Wirth. Spanish installation artist and sculptor Cristina Iglesias transformed the near-derelict lighthouse on Santa Clara island into the vast geological sculpture *Hondalea* (*Marine Abyss*), which opened to the public last year. You can reach the island by ferry from the harbour. Two much lauded festivals take place annually in San Sebastián – the Jazz Festival (on July 21-25) and the Film Festival (on September 16-24 this year).

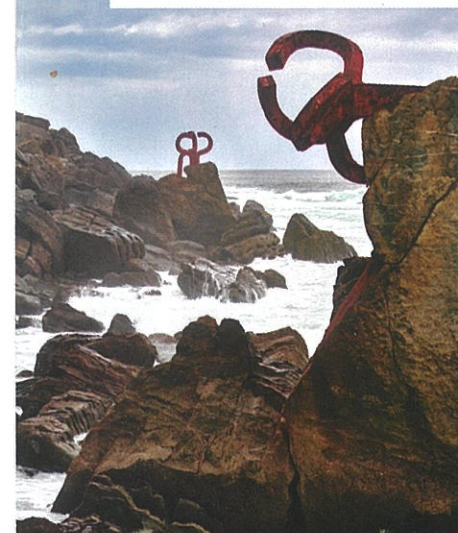
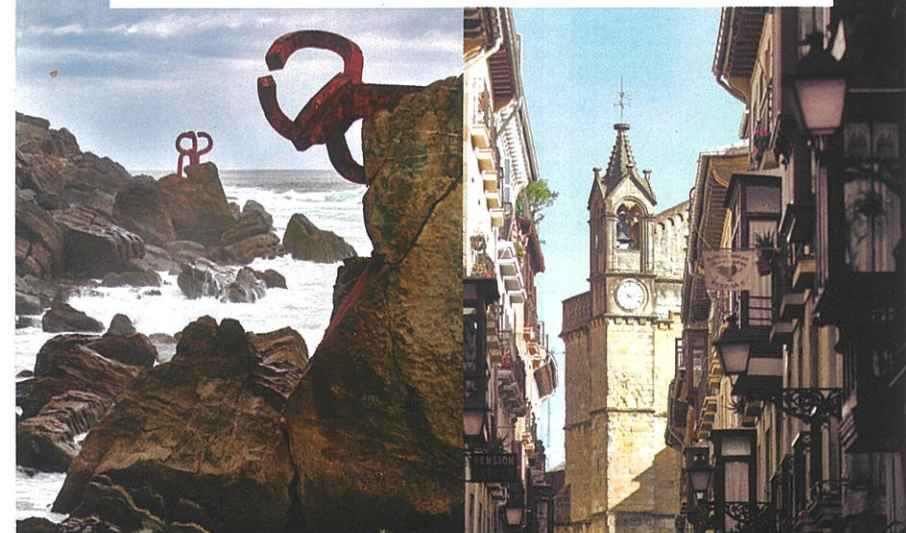
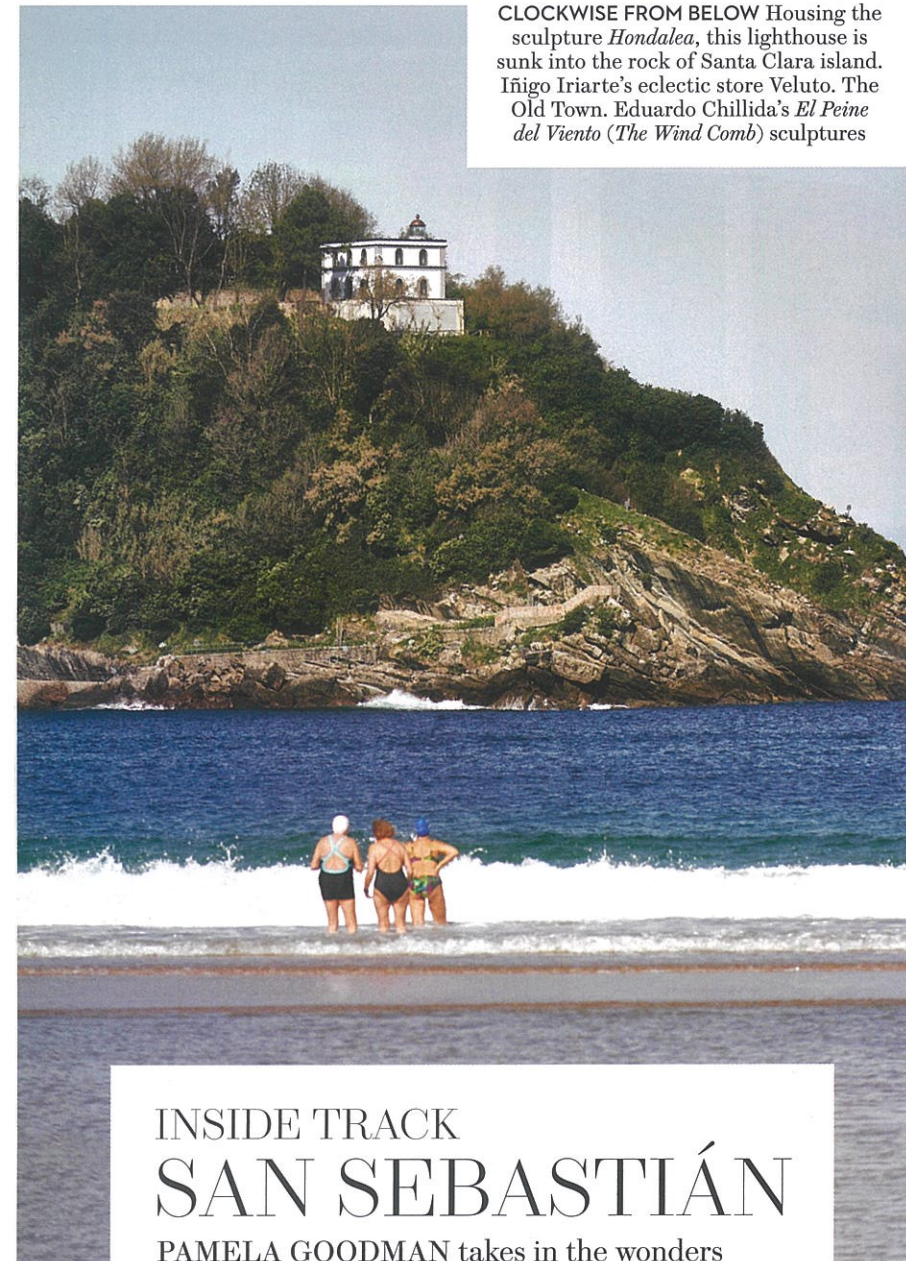
Restaurants and bars

So what defines San Sebastián as a destination? Some would say its beaches, or perhaps its history as the summer retreat of the Spanish Royal court. Others might cite its fierce Basque identity. But most would simply say 'food'. Without doubt, it is one of the great gourmet cities of Europe, with no fewer than 19 Michelin stars. Three establishments alone (**Arzak**, **Akelarre** and **Martin Berasategui**) share nine between them. A notch down from the top, but no less celebrated, is **Rekondo**, which boasts the best wine cellar in Spain. There are more than 100,000 bottles of wine on site and the wine list runs to a staggering 300 pages. Its chef, Iñaki Arrieta, is a past master at fine-tuning typical Basque cuisine. This can be more humbly experienced at any of the cafés and bars in the Old Town. These are the gourmet hangouts for sampling *pintxos* – a type of finger-food that was originally a slice of baguette with any combination of fish, meat, cheese or vegetable topping, which has now evolved to include more sophisticated, tapas-style snacks. The custom is to move from one bar to the next, eating and drinking as you go. **Casa Vergara** (Calle Mayor 21) has one of the largest

INSIDE TRACK SAN SEBASTIÁN

PAMELA GOODMAN takes in the wonders of this Basque coastal city, renowned for its food scene, including world-class restaurants

PHOTOGRAPHS DANIEL SCHÄFER



selections of traditional *pintxos*. Otherwise, head to: **La Cuchara de San Telmo** (Kalea 4) for its warm braised beef cheek and suckling pig; **Ganbara** (Kalea 21) for the best *croquetas* in town; **Goiz Argi** (Kalea 4) for the prawn skewers; and finally to **La Viña** (Kalea 3) for the most famous baked cheesecake in Spain. A sweet tooth can also be sated at one of the local pastry shops, **Casa Otaegui** (Narrika 15) being the best, particularly for *panchineta* – a Basque puff pastry cake with almonds and custard cream.

Shopping

San Sebastián can lay few claims to being a great shopping destination, but the best shops are the oldest. Known for traditional children's clothes, **Irulea** (Calle Mayor 7) hit the headlines when it provided Princess Charlotte's outfit for her first public outing as a baby. **Casa Ponsol** (Narrika 4) is the oldest hat shop in Spain and a purveyor of the *txapela* – the Basque peaked beret. **Almacenes Arenzana** (Getaria 14) sells rope, wicker, cork, ribbons and string. One exception is **Veluto** (San Bartolome 5), a voluptuous modern showroom for Iñigo Iriarte's interior-design practice, which sells everything from furniture, lighting and homeware to books and body lotion.

Hotel

In a city best known for its grandes dames palace hotels and surfer-friendly Airbnbs, the recently refurbished **Villa Soro** is a step in a different direction. Smart, sophisticated and immaculately finished, this boutique hotel comes with all the refinement of its sister properties (Sant Francesc and Can Ferrereta in Mallorca). Built in the city's late-19th-century heyday and with more than a passing nod to the high-Victorian style of architecture, the villa pairs grand features – a vast oak staircase, stained-glass ceiling panels, a tiny chapel – with elegant design. The monochrome theme of the Salon Londaiz is echoed in the bathrooms and many of the 25 bedrooms; Room 12 is the top pick, offering a wonderful terrace. The centre is a 20-minute walk away. Villa Soro has double rooms from €250 a night, B&B (hotelvillasoro.com).

Don't miss

No mention of San Sebastián would be complete without reference to its beaches – all three of them. **La Concha** is the biggest and most central – a broad, sandy sweep backed by a glorious esplanade and the venerable Hotel de Londres, which overlooks Santa Clara island. **Zurriola** is perfect for surfers wanting to catch the waves, while locals, particularly from the Antiguo region of the city, favour family outings to the sheltered **Ondarreeta** □



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Head chef Iñaki Arrieta and manager Lourdes Rekondo at Rekondo. *Pintxos* at Casa Vergara. The Eguzki Soro bar at Villa Soro. *Hondalea* showcases the distinctive Basque coastal geology. Santa Clara island in La Concha Bay. Family-run weaving house Arenzana opened in 1900

