



Life and food of Bilbao

An Aussies journey into Basque country

About me and my journey.

Hi all, and welcome to my wonderful journey into the world of Basque cuisine.

First let me introduce myself, my name is Rob and during my time on exchange in Bilbao I was in my final year of my Chefs training.

I was lucky enough to spend 2 months working, living, learning and traveling around the beautiful Basque country in northern Spain.

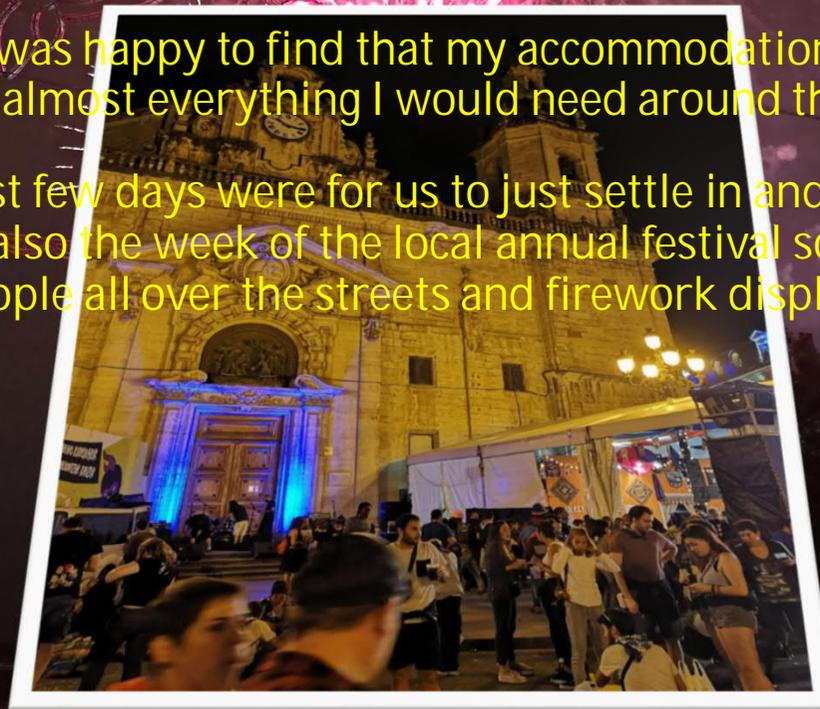


Leaving home and settling in.

As I'm sure anyone can understand leaving home and my family was a very hard thing to do. Especially when I was leaving behind my wife and 4 kids including my new 2 month old daughter.

Arriving in Bilbao I was happy to find that my accommodation was within easy walking distance to almost everything I would need around the town.

Lucky for us our first few days were for us to just settle in and have a look around the town. This was also the week of the local annual festival so every night was a party night with people all over the streets and firework displays every night.





My work place.

I was blessed to have been place with the wonderful people at Aizian. I was even more joyed to find out I would be working with and being trained by JOSÉ MIGUEL OLAZABALAGA.

Some of the dishes I learned to make.





Day to day life

Once I started my placement I was quick to discover the differences between Spain and Finland.

Coming from Australia the difference wasn't too big for me but would be a massive shock to someone that has never traveled.

I guess the biggest difference was the time people eat and are still active around town.

In Finland where you may have lunch around 11am and dinner around 6pm, in Spain this is completely different. In Spain lunch was between 2pm and 4pm with dinner not starting before 9pm.

This really reflects and influences the working hours of a chef ,as I will continue explaining .



Working week

Obviously being a chef is not a 9-5 job. Yet in Finland it is almost viewed as this. Most roles in Finland are lunch or dinner shifts, not so in Spain. You are expected to work doubles and as a trainee I was no exception.

My normal day consisted of starting work at 10am and working until anytime between 4-6pm.

Then we would have a break and start work again at 8pm and work until last dish is served. This could be anytime between 11pm-1am.

We were shut on Sundays and lucky for me I got Mondays off also.

Travel

One of the biggest things I can suggest is to make sure you make time to travel and see the area around where you are staying.

I did plenty of travel on my days off ranging from going to the beach via the metro to flying down to Barcelona to spend a weekend.

Yet the highlight of my traveling would have to be the 3 days I hired a car and drove around southern France into and over the Pyrenees via Andorra and back to Bilbao. This is a once in a lifetime experience that would never have happened if I had not participated in the training program.



Overview

Overall this was an experience of a lifetime, and anyone that is thinking about doing an international internship has to keep a few things in mind.

1. You are there to learn
2. You will miss home
3. You will experience things you will never forget
4. It will cost a lot more than you think
5. You will love every minute of it



Enjoy yourself





Always remember the great
people you work with