

# EDUCATION IN URDAIBAI BIOSPHERE RESERVE (BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COUNTRY, SPAIN)

## URDAIBAI BIOSPHERE RESERVE: GENERAL INFORMATION

The Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve is located in a sheltered place on the Bay of Biscay coast, in the province of Bizkaia, one of the “historical territories” of the Basque Autonomous Community (northern Spain). Thanks to its cliffs and beaches, its woods and inland rivers, its marshes and its river plains, Urdaibai has a great landscape and environmental diversity, probably the greatest of the Basque Country. Urdaibai covers an area of 220 km<sup>2</sup> with around 45,000 inhabitants in 22 municipalities; the historical town of Gernika is among them.

The URDAIBAI Biosphere Reserve is the most important natural area in the Basque Autonomous Community. It holds the **Biosphere Reserve status by UNESCO since 1984** and it is included in the NATURA 2000 network of European protected natural areas.

The economy is based on metallurgy, fishing/maritime activities and forestry, and on the exploitation of local resources (arable and cattle farming). There is tourist trade also, centred mainly on the local beaches, the historical towns and the natural environment, with a network of agri-tourism establishments and hotels scattered throughout the area.

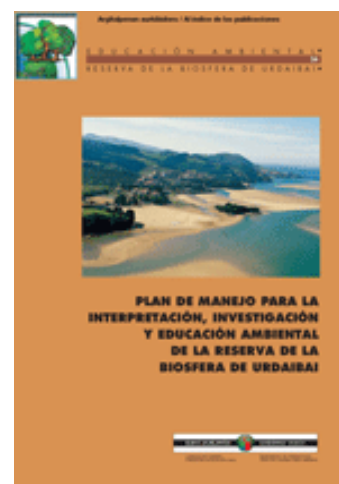
URDAIBAI contains numerous archaeological sites and historical remains, many of them highly valuable for understanding the successive stages of human presence in the region and the influence of human activity in the landscape along the History. Today URDAIBAI is a top tourist destination: it offers a blend of culture and nature and a wide range of attractions.

## MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNING BOARD

Many regulatory instruments have been established for the management of the Reserve: the most important is the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve Protection and Structuring Act (Act 5/1989).

To implement this act and to protect and recover all the ecosystems in the reserve, the Master Plan for Use and Management was converted to Decree 242 in 1993. **In 1997 the Management Plan for Interpretation, Research and Environmental Education** was approved.

The Governing Board is a consultative organ attached to the environmental authorities of the Basque Government (Dept. of Environment and Land Use), composed by representatives of the authorities of the municipalities in URDAIBAI, and different organisations and associations concerned about the studying and conservation of environmental resources.



## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN URDAIBAI

### Primary education

The municipality of Gernika has one of the five Ingurugela-CEIDAS, capacity and training centres for teachers and schools under the Basque Government coordination. The staff is composed by two technicians, who are primary school teachers full-time released for this purpose. It coordinates the environmental programmes and activities of the **13 schools** which are now working in the School Agenda 21 Programme of URDAIBAI, with almost **5432 children in the Reserve**.

Therefore, environmental educational materials are developed and applied, followed by a close monitoring of the educational activities and results. One of the **goals** of the School Agenda 21 in Urdaibai is the **close coordination between the Environment Education Programmes (School Agenda 21) and the local environment programmes (Local Agenda 21)**.

Other stakeholders and social actors take active part in the developing of education materials and the implantation of activities. Among them **UNESCO Etxea**, UNESCO Centre in the Basque Country, which has developed several materials related to the better knowledge of the Urdaibai Landscape. Additionally, UNESCO Etxea has organized the annual Urdaibai Conference for Sustainability since 1994, with a wide range of themes related with energy, education or cultural heritage.

Many other actors take part dynamizing environmental education for children; **Sukarrieta Centre for Experimental Education** is one of the most active institution. Funded by a local bank and the Basque Government, it holds regularly camps of groups of primary students from all over the Basque Country. These students participate in an outstanding learning experience in the heart of the Biosphere Reserve. Many environmental programmes, publications and toolkits have been developed.

### Higher education

**UNESCO Chair on "Sustainable Development and Environmental Education"** of the University of the Basque Country collaborates with URDAIBAI Biosphere Reserve by promoting research projects and studies on the area with the aim of learning more about it and to be able to set up measures of protection and development. Numerous research groups from a variety of disciplines are currently conducting work in and about URDAIBAI, using the Biosphere Reserve as a reference area for research (<http://www.ehu.es/cdsea>), this information resource is being used to edit a **scientific-didactical guide** of Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve.

### Related links

The Agenda 21 in the UNESCO-UNECE website:

[http://www.unece.org/env/esd/GoodPractices/Submissions/Countries/Spain/Basquecommunity/School%20A21\\_e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/env/esd/GoodPractices/Submissions/Countries/Spain/Basquecommunity/School%20A21_e.pdf)

UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development and Environmental Education of the University of the Basque Country: <http://www.ehu.es/temporalcatedra/index.php>



**MORE INFORMATION:**

**Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve:** <http://www.ingurumena.ejgv.euskadi.net/r49-12892/en/>

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