

# THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH

Nestled in the westernmost corner of the Basque Country, Karrantza boasts a stunning rural landscape. This charming landscape also hides a significant industrial heritage, exemplified by the former Dolomitas factory, now a museum.

This industrial site is inextricably linked to the record-breaking Pozalagua Cave, creating a unique coexistence. Today, both sites are living examples of how industrial heritage goes beyond machinery and production areas. It's the fusion of these elements with the landscape, the raw materials and, ultimately, the history of one of the Basque Country's industrial giants, Altos Hornos de Vizcaya.

## > Dolomitas Museum > Pozalagua Cave

➔ Step back in time to the height of Basque industrialisation at the **Dolomitas del Norte** factory, located in the Ambasaguas neighbourhood of Karrantza. Founded in 1947, the factory produced refractory materials for the metallurgical furnaces of local industry, mainly for the mighty metallurgical company Altos Hornos de Vizcaya.

The exploitation of the Donosa quarry began in 1956, next to the Pozalagua Cave. The quarry was one of the best sources of hydrothermal dolomite in the area. The extracted dolomite was transported by aerial cableway to the Dolomitas del Norte factory in the Ambasaguas neighbourhood, about 8 kilometres away.



The Pozalagua Cave auditorium



*Aerial cable cars were widely used in the mining industry as they significantly reduced distances and facilitated transport in difficult to access areas. This particular cable car covered a distance of almost 3 kilometres between the quarry and the factory. Suspended from 27 metal pillars, this system revolutionised transport in difficult terrain and remained in operation until the quarry closed in 1976. It was the last of its kind in Biscay.*



Dolomitas factory

➔ The **Dolomitas Museum** is the only place in the Basque Country where you can see the huge pulley system used by these cable cars. The museum is located in the unloading station of the old factory, and was declared a site of cultural interest by the Basque Government in 2002.

➔ Just 100 metres away is the spectacular **Pozalagua Cave**. Pozalagua is a natural wonder, discovered by chance after a blasting operation carried out by the Dolomitas del Norte company. It boasts the world's highest concentration of eccentric stalactites, formations that defy gravity to form a dazzling mosaic.



*After being stored in silos, the dolomite was transferred to rotary kilns where it reached temperatures of 1800° and was transformed into sintered dolomite. This material was used to make refractory bricks, which were essential for industrial progress as they lined the high furnaces of the great foundries. The sintered dolomite could withstand the high temperatures reached in these furnaces, eliminating the need to shut them down for constant repairs and helping to increase production.*



The Pozalagua Cave

The visit gives us the opportunity to explore a significant part of our industrial history which, despite its importance, remains relatively unknown. What's surprising is that it takes place in such a spectacular natural and scenic setting; indeed, there are few places where nature is as magnificent as in the **Armañón Natural Park**. The park's peaks and forests are home to an endless network of trails and more than two hundred caves. The park's interpretation centre is located in the very station where the mineral extracted from the Pozalagua quarry was crushed and loaded for transport to the factory.



The proliferation of stalactites and formations of all kinds makes Pozalagua **a hypnotic place, a veritable underground cathedral**.

The visit unfolds among columns, flowstones and a dry lake, with tens of thousands of eccentric stalactites seemingly erupting at random, forming an endless coral reef, a forest in the bowels of the earth. The tour culminates at a viewpoint where you can appreciate the grandeur and beauty of this subterranean corner in all its splendour. The temperature inside the cave remains around 13°C all year round, so it is advisable to wear suitable clothing.

# THE MUST-SEES

---



The **Dolomitas Museum** recalls the history of this little-known factory, which was dedicated to producing the basic refractory material for the furnaces of the local industry, mainly for the Altos Hornos de Vizcaya metallurgical company. The raw material was dolomite, a mineral brought down from the Pozalagua area by cable car. It was during these mining operations that Pozalagua Cave was discovered, with its unique eccentric stalactites. Contact us in advance to arrange a guided tour.



About 7 kilometres from the museum, in the heart of the **Armañón Natural Park**, is the **Pozalagua Cave**. Unlike conventional stalactites, Pozalagua has eccentric stalactites that grow capriciously in all directions, forming magnificent figures as if they were roots or corals. Geologists consider Pozalagua to be the first in the world for the number of eccentric stalactites it has. All visits are guided. On Sunday mornings there is the Flashback experience, which allows you to enter the cave in the dark with the help of a headlamp, just as its discoverers did.



The interpretation centre of the **Armañón Natural Park** (called Parketxea or Park House in Basque) is located opposite the Pozalagua Cave, in the old loading facilities of the Dolomitas del Norte quarry. It is a three-storey building with a viewing terrace and a panoramic lift that leads to a 3D artificial cave.



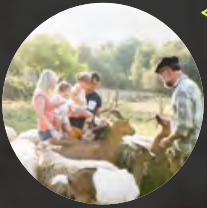
Enkarterri boasts a record number of grand country houses and extravagant mansions, built by **indianos** (townspeople who made a fortune in the Americas before returning to flaunt their new-found wealth). Each boasts extensive gardens and groundbreaking architecture for its time. We recommend a guided tour of the mansions in the Concha neighbourhood of Karrantza, where we will tell you how they made their fortunes, their luxurious daily lives, their great charitable works and many other stories.



About 3 km away is **Karpin Fauna**. It is a shelter for wild animals who can no longer return to their natural habitat – victims of trafficking, illegal hunting, and abandonment. Here, they find a haven and the care they need.



**Lanestosa** the smallest municipality in Biscay in terms of area, is located about 13 kilometres from the Dolomitas Factory Museum. With barely two hundred inhabitants, it seems to have remained untouched by time. Its cobbled streets, flanked by large houses with balconies overflowing with flowers, have preserved the same structure since the 13th century.



**JOIN A SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK...** and discover the secrets of a trade with more than 4000 years of history! Take part in this experience, which is open to everyone, although it has been specially designed to be enjoyed by the youngest members of the family. The shepherd will take you on a tour of his cheese factory in Karrantza, showing you how he makes his precious handmade cheeses and showing you the sheep. Contact us to enjoy this incredible experience!

## HOW TO GET THERE

The best way to get to Karrantza is by car. If you're coming from Bilbao, take the BI-630 regional road, which takes about an hour.

If you are coming from Cantabria via Colindres, take the CA-629 to Ramales.



By private car

### Dolomitas

[43.239499, -3.358149]:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/pP1EmNkQFrwZPFgSA>

### Pozalagua cave

[43.260131, -3.385324]:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/sssYujidEK4VbQyV38>



By train

### Karrantza

[43.238854, -3.357937]:

EVE railways / Timetables and fares / Consult timetables ([renfe.com](http://renfe.com))



By bus

<https://www.bizkaia.eus/es/web/bizkaibus/lineas>



RENT A BIKE AND GO CYCLING:

Beroutes <https://beroutes.com/>

Urgebi Bikes <https://www.enkartribike.com/>

## WHERE TO EAT?

In Karrantza, the local cuisine pays homage to the land. This valley is famous for its farms and livestock, which provide us with a range of local products, such as the milk used to make the traditional sheep's cheese (don't forget to visit one of our cheese dairies and join the shepherds). Above all, Karrantza is a haven

for food lovers, who appreciate the use of fresh, local ingredients. Hearty food was a necessity to replenish energy after a hard day's industrial work, but in an era where health is paramount, there's no shortage of options to suit every palate.

## TIPS



Wear comfortable walking shoes..



Respect the environment, local people and animals.



Enjoy nature without noise or haste.



If you're driving, remember that cyclists and pedestrians have priority.



Adhere to general traffic rules.



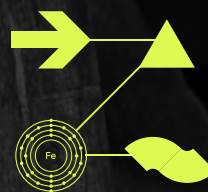
Be careful, especially in tunnels and viaducts.



If you're cycling, always wear a helmet and ride carefully on sections shared with vehicles.

LEARN MORE AT: [www.visitenkarterri.com](http://www.visitenkarterri.com)

JATORRIA; MENDIA,  
BURDINA ETA ITSASOA  
EL ORIGEN; MONTAÑA,  
HIERRO Y MAR



[www.visitenkarterri.com](http://www.visitenkarterri.com)

*Euskadi, anzolana, bien común*



**EUSKADI**  
BASQUE COUNTRY

**Basque**  
INDUSTRIAL  
TOURISM

**Bizkaia**  
foru aldundia  
diputación foral

**IRON RIVER**  
INDUSTRIAL  
TOURISM  
IN BIZKAIA

**enkartur**  
[www.visitenkarterri.com](http://www.visitenkarterri.com)