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**Alhóndiga** Bilbao

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## I. Key facts

- Alhóndiga is a modernist building that used to be an oil, liqueur, and wine storage facility.
- It was built in 1909 by Ricardo Bastida. Ten years after its opening, in 1919, a fire led to its closing. It remained closed until the present.
- In 1999, it was designated as an Asset of Cultural Interest.
- It has been rehabilitated and transformed into an open, innovative, and sustainable construction by French architect and designer Philippe Starck.
- The Latin quotation “*Mens sana in corpore sano*” (“A healthy mind in a healthy body”) can be said to summarise its spirit, for body care and soul development come together at AlhóndigaBilbao.
- AlhóndigaBilbao has been rehabilitated to become a new leisure centre and cultural hub in town.
- It relies on three themes -Physical Exercise, Media Library, and Extra Activities- and is divided into three separate large spaces.
- When it reopens on May 18, 2010, Bilbao will have got an architecturally and historically valuable building back.
- The AlhóndigaBilbao project was budgeted at €75 million for rehabilitation work and equipment.
- The project’s architectural rehabilitation and urban development work began in 2002 and finished this year.

## II. The Alhóndiga project

One of Bilbao's architectural icons is emerging again in the heart of town. It is Alhóndiga (1909), the old wine warehouse designed by Ricardo Bastida, which has morphed into Alhóndiga Bilbao -a place swarming with activity for all and sundry that is expected to become a **new leisure and cultural hub**.

Alhóndiga Bilbao is bringing its curtain up with the hope of hosting activities in its 43,000-square-metre surface area that encourage the love of knowledge, awaken cultural sensitivity, lead to positive experiences in the different stages of life, and contribute to the consolidation of strong values.

Culture, knowledge, and fun are coming together in an **innovative, multidisciplinary space** that will be brimming with life -a meeting point to share, learn, and above all, enjoy with family and friends.

### **CONCEPT: *Mens sana in corpore sano***

Alhóndiga Bilbao is a leisure, cultural, and wellness centre oriented towards personal growth.

The Latin quotation derived from one of Juvenal's *Satires* captures the spirit and concept of the centre. The idea is that Alhóndiga Bilbao is a place where visitors can accomplish the goal of Antiquity of striking balance between the body and the mind.

Since Philippe Starck first took charge of the rehabilitation project, every task was aimed at the creation of a **multidisciplinary space open to all citizens and oriented towards personal growth and the development of human relationships**. This is the most interesting thing about Alhóndiga Bilbao, for its purpose will make it an **ever-changing place**.

### **PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES**

*The multiple cultural and leisure activities will be the backbone of the building. Citizens will have access to a wide range of them: fitness, exhibitions, lectures, videos, performances, and educational workshops for different people of different ages, who can come on their own or with their families and friends*

## MANAGEMENT

AlhóndigaBilbao is the most important strategic project undertaken by Bilbao authorities in the past few years. To carry it out, a single shareholder corporation that is **100% owned by the city** was established to perform the tasks of building rehabilitation, management, and provision of leisure and cultural services.

Although AlhóndigaBilbao will be a **public use** facility, it houses companies that share the project's vision and social commitment values through space rental.



### III. History of Alhóndiga

In 1905, Ricardo Bastida was entrusted with the task of building a new warehouse in Ensanche de Albia. The young architect designed a state-of-the-art and functional industrial building that was to serve as a wine and liqueur storage facility. His modernist warehouse was built using brick, iron, and reinforced concrete.

The new warehouse -*Alhóndiga*- opened in 1909. Ten years later, it was devastated by fire. It remained closed for many decades, awaiting rehabilitation and a new purpose.

Since 1975, many projects have been drafted to revamp this original building, which is part of Bilbao's cityscape and the collective memory of *Bilbainos*.



In 2002, the first steps were taken towards rehabilitation based on a project to convert the empty warehouse to a multi-function, all-encompassing centre. The internationally renowned multi-faceted designer Philippe Starck was commissioned to carry out the project. The architectural rehabilitation and urban development work has taken eight years to complete.

## IV. Alhóndiga Bilbao, the building

Formerly a wine storage facility, with a modernist character and designated Asset of Cultural Interest by the Basque Government in 1999, Alhóndiga is celebrating its 100th anniversary, after exterior renovation and interior transformation, including the development of new spaces by Philippe Starck.

### INSIDE ALHÓNDIGABILBAO

Those who cross the Alhóndiga Bilbao's threshold will be received by the "Gran Plaza Central", an area of 6,193 m<sup>2</sup> surrounded by a colonnade with 43 pillars with the task of supporting the internal buildings in the shape of a cube.

The **43 columns**, designed by film and TV set designer **Lorenzo Baraldi**, drew inspiration from various architectural styles and materials, mostly marble, bronze, wood, brick, glazed terracotta tiles, cement, and Lecce stone. **This reveals the designers' trust in "noble materials"**, contrasting with those used by Bastida in the original building -steel, brick and concrete-, which have been kept where they could stand alongside new, contemporary building materials or structures.



These three themed buildings (knowledge, well-being and leisure) make up a multi-purpose area of almost 40,000 square metres, each divided into three floors.

The basements are accessed from this meeting point, to reach the leisure area, cinemas, exhibition hall and the theatre and an auditorium for 400 spectators. To round it off, the visitor can go up to the magnificent "Sun Terrace", where the Alhóndiga's urban spa is located. This will be the admiration of visitors entering from downstairs, thanks to the transparent bottom of its swimming pools.

An enormous projection screen hangs in the centre of the Alhóndiga universe, where young artists will be able to display their creations sharing space with an enormous virtual sun, a star that will illuminate the interior and provide the energy and heat required for the perfect genesis of the Starck project.

## THE THREE CUBES

The three three-level themed buildings featuring multi-purpose spaces cover some **40,000 square metres**. These three areas of Alhóndiga are dedicated to fitness and physical exercise, a media library, and extra activities.

### a) Physical Exercise Building

With 2676 m2 surface area and 2 floors with a double height, AlhondigaBilbao offers an ideal space for relaxation, health and physical development. The corridor to the upper swimming pools and changing rooms leads off from here. The gym has the most modern equipment and is flanked by perimeter monitors with live broadcasts for the enjoyment of users, who will be able to exercise whilst watching their favourite TV programme.

*In AlhóndigaBilbao visitors can get fit through intense workout routines or they can exercise to connect body, mind and soul*

People who prefer relaxing exercises can get deep into disciplines, guided by experts, designed to connect body and mind such as tai chi chuan or yoga, among others. As many as 30 fitness programmes with sessions comprising more than 250 weekly hours will be available in AlhóndigaBilbao.

### b) Media Library

With 3800 m2 surface area distributed in 3 floors, the Media Library shows a 'new' concept of libraries understood as the fabric of social space. A meeting point for cultural tendencies in which it is possible to enjoy audiovisual presentations, attend training workshops, listen to music or simply have fun, as well as making bibliographic consultations.

*The media library brings cultural collections in various media closer to all AlhóndigaBilbao users, whatever their ages*

The media library contains multidisciplinary collections specialising in literature, comics, exercise, health, leisure and entertainment, audiovisuals and science. All information in various media can be accessed for free and is sorted by simple, user-friendly criteria.

The media library will feature a room for the little ones. It will contain some 8,000 copies in different media, and facilities especially designed for kids. Parents will be encouraged to stay with their children and see how they discover the world of reading while getting information on child development, child psychology and parenting.

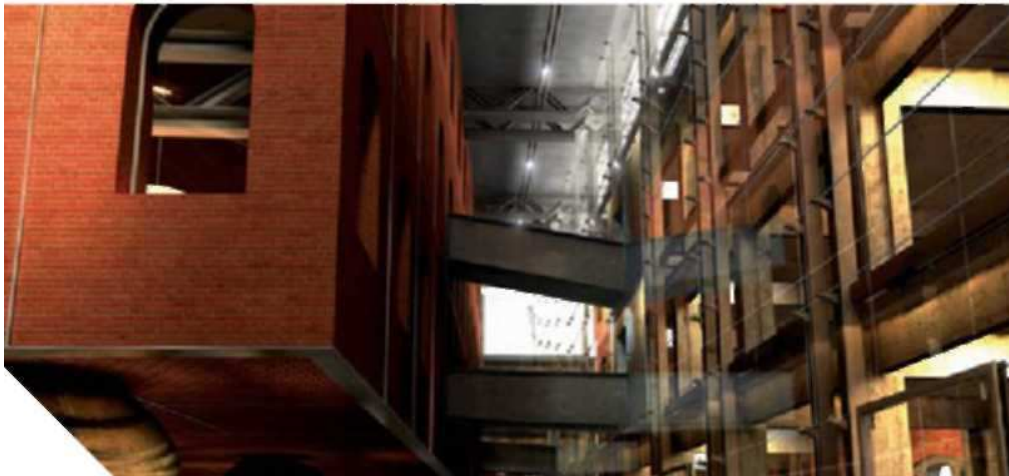
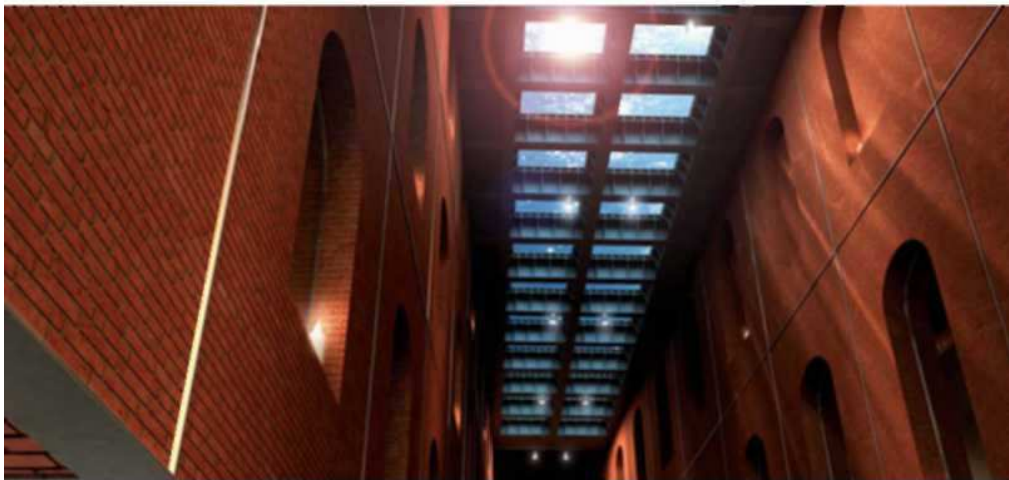
### c) Complementary activities buildings

In 3 floors with 3.800 m2 surface area, are located complementary activities of AlhondigaBilbao. The first two floors of this building are for public use,



whilst the third floor is solely for facilities. The leisure area will be housed here, led by the Yandiola restaurant-buffet and the AlhóndigaBilbao shop, where an important selection of objects designed by Philippe Starck can be found.

*AlhóndigaBilbao has an area for extra activities where visitors can taste modern, sophisticated dishes, go to the cinema or buy exclusive gifts*



## LOCALIZATION

The centre is located in the Herat of the Abando quarter, with the Plaza Arriquirar as a luxurious foyer to access a cultural space that does not require a reservation.

The former roundabout leaves cars on one side, in order to focus on the pedestrian and rises to a height of almost 2 metres to lavish it with new urban fittings and trees with spectacular flowering. There is also pedestrian access from Alameda Rekalde and Iparragirre street.

Two of the three entrances to the building have been adapted for people with disabilities: lifts are available from Iparragirre and there is a ramp from the Plaza Arriquirar.

## SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

The construction details of Alhóndiga Bilbao represent a bid for the most efficient sustainability, whilst respecting the uniqueness of a protected building, due to its architectural value, at all times. Some useful facts:

**4,000 tonnes** of steel have been used to build the metal structure that houses the Gran Plaza Central, which is covered with 14,000 m<sup>2</sup> of pre-stressed reinforced concrete.

**200 m<sup>2</sup>** of thermal solar panels heat the water in the indoor swimming pools, reusing 30% of the water thanks to an innovative hydraulic system.

**100 years on**, the building conserves the façade bricks as a cover element. The advanced panelling system used, which is unique in Spain, places Bilbao at the forefront of new construction trends in Europe.

**7 cinema screens** with the latest technology in digital screening will convince even the most demanding audience. Capacity varies from 70 people in the two small screens to 245 people in the largest screen.

**4.20 metres** is the height of the gym, thanks to a steel framework with glass floors that allows bathers in the swimming pool to be observed above their heads. The aim of the architectural combination is to obtain large, open spaces filled with light. This light will emerge from the Alhóndiga every day of the year to culturally light up our city.

## V. Philippe Starck

Alhóndiga Bilbao is the realisation of Philippe Starck's fertile imagination. The challenge was to achieve a humanized construction, to transform the building into a new reference point in the everyday life of Bilbao residents.

The project, which pursues a sense of design for people, was undertaken and improved by Starck, who even created the furniture especially for the Alhóndiga building.

Philippe Starck fell in love with the Alhóndiga Bilbao project, and with the city as well. In fact, it was a case of love at first sight. And this one-of-a-kind urban space bears its designer's unmistakable seal, the astounding character that appears in all his creations.



For over 30 years, this original designer and architect has bypassed conventions. His numerous works, remarkable for their architecture and interior design, include the Asahi Breweries headquarters, in Tokyo, Japan, and the Teatríz restaurant, in Madrid, Spain. However, Starck's best-known building is the Royalton Hotel, in New York, USA.

Philippe Starck's talent knows no boundaries. He has designed clothing, chairs, baggage, watches, cafés, motorbikes, yachts, and, of course, buildings, all of them notable for their functionality and aesthetics.

The designer's commitment to the environment can be seen in all his works, including Alhóndiga Bilbao. His ideas regarding sustainable design can be found in the *Good Goods* mail-order catalogue —“non-products for the non-consumer of the moral market to come”—, his organic food company, or his newly developed concept of “democratic ecology,” realised in the wind turbine for the home, available at a reasonable price.

## VI. Bilbao, an avant-garde city

**Bilbao** is the capital city of Vizcaya Province, and one of the most important industrial and financial hubs in the Basque Country. It is also a city full of contrasts, combining huge green areas with buildings that are silent witnesses to its industrial past, or narrow alleys in the Old Quarter with wide open avenues, or even classical buildings like the Museum of Fine Arts with avant-garde icons like the Guggenheim Museum.

Bilbao is a cosmopolitan city, open to the rest of Europe. Despite its industrial nature, its fast beating rhythm and warm dwellers make visitors feel at home right from the moment they set foot.

**Bilbao** is a city committed to avant-garde architecture, which has triggered the transformation of the estuary from industrial and business channel to cultural thoroughfare. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is located in the former port area, leading to urban revitalisation and attracting ever larger numbers of cultural tourists.

The city has other assets to rely on, such as its beautiful landscapes in its environs, thanks to which the Basque Country has become an ideal place for tours and excursions, or the world-famous food, prepared by renowned chefs.

There are interesting cultural and art activities all year round in Bilbao: visits to prehistoric caves, art sites, art collections, theatre shows, concerts, and much more.

*In 2009, Bilbao welcomed 615,545 visitors. 33.7% of them were international travellers, hailing mainly from France, the UK, and Germany.*

International travellers by country of origin

**2009**

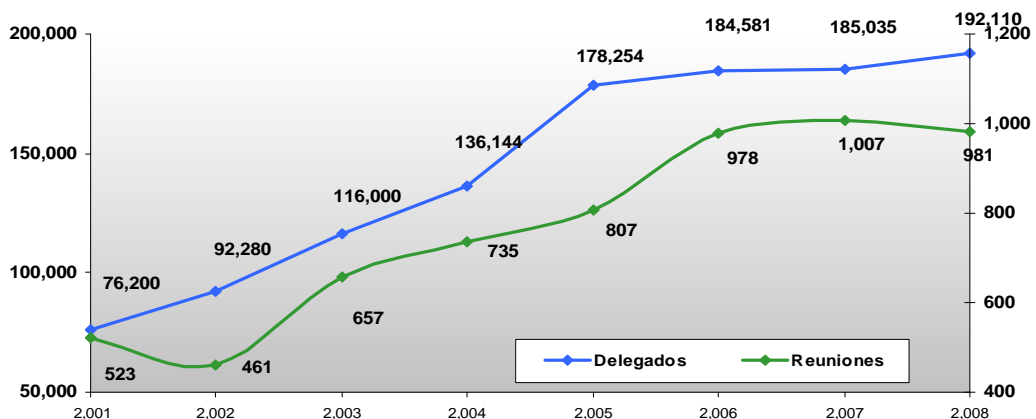
France	17.3%
UK	10.17%
Germany	9.85%
USA & Canada	8.15%
Italy	8%
Latin America	8%
Portugal	4.5%

**2007-2009 COMPARISON**

	2007	2009
Overnight hotel stays	531,859	1,125,047
Hotel guests	International	207,524
	Spanish	408,021

Bilbao, city of conferences

**Evolution of Bilbao meetings industry 2001-2008:**



Delegados = Attendees Reuniones = Meetings  
Source: Bilbao Convention Bureau

## **Bilbao's avant-garde architecture**

Alhóndiga Bilbao will open under a new concept where design innovation and an innovative programme blend. The centre is thus expected to be a new attraction in Bilbao, in line with the city's commitment to avant-garde art.

Other innovative buildings developed over the past few years include:

### **- Guggenheim Museum**

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is a contemporary art centre. It was designed by Canadian architect Frank Gehry. The museum's most amazing feature is the building itself, whose curvilinear and twisted shape is covered with limestone, crystal curtains, and titanium sheets. 11,000 square metres out of the total 24,000 are used for exhibitions; they are divided into 19 galleries.

When looked at from the river, the museum resembles a ship – a tribute to Bilbao's influential port activity. Its shining panels look like fish scales as a way to bring out the river-dominated setting.

Guggenheim Bilbao displays mostly works by contemporary artists. Traditional painting and sculpture play only a minor role in its facilities. Art events change on a regular basis, which means *Bilbainos* and out-of-towners can enjoy a wide range of modern art collections.

To learn about the activities and events at the Guggenheim, go to [www.guggenheim-bilbao.es](http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.es)



- **Euskalduna Conference Centre:**

The Euskalduna Conference Centre and Concert Hall stands on the edge of the estuary, a focus of cultural activity in Bilbao. The building is in an area that used to be home to the Euskalduna shipbuilding company. It was designed by architects Federico Soriano and Dolores Palacios as a conference centre that holds music or cultural events as well.



Construction work commenced in 1994 in this 2.5-ha centre that opened its doors to the public in February 1999. The space has a main hall seating 2,200, three smaller halls, eight rehearsal rooms, seven conference halls, and other facilities. Adjoining the Euskalduna there are several urban artworks, like the well-known “Bosque de Árboles,” a group of lampposts that resemble a forest.

For more info on the calendar of activities at the Euskalduna Conference Centre, please visit [www.euskalduna.net](http://www.euskalduna.net).

- **Zubizuri Bridge:**



Designed by Valencia-born architect Santiago Calatrava, the Zubizuri Bridge began to be built in 1990 and started operating on May 30, 1997.

The bridge comprises an inclined arch linking two platforms, with access ramps and steps on both banks of the estuary. The footbridge is supported by steel cables. The structure is painted in white and boasts the unmistakable Calatrava’s style.

The Zubizuri opened almost in unison with the Guggenheim Museum. The white bridge has come to be one of the landmarks in the newly developed Bilbao. It is one of the many tourist attractions by the estuary. Its avant-garde design catches the attention of visitors.

- **Metro Bilbao**

The underground in Bilbao was designed by architect Norman Foster. Using



steel, glass and concrete, Foster accomplished a typically urban, ample, and comfortable design. The “fosteritos,” named after their author, are glass structures accessing stations that form part of the long series of city highlights.

The underground’s designed earned Foster the Veronica Rudge Green Prize in Urban Design established by Harvard University.

- **Airport**

Bilbao’s airport terminal is a work by architect from Valencia Santiago Calatrava. Seen from the outside, it looks like a bird ready to fly, which is why everybody calls it “*La Paloma*” (Spanish for “the dove”). The terminal is mostly white and, as in so many works by Calatrava, glass and concrete are the primary materials.





- **Iberdrola Tower**

The Iberdrola Tower is a skyscraper whose construction started on March 19, 2007 and is expected to finish during the first quarter of 2011.

The tower's designer is Argentine architect César Pelli, who specialises in high-rise buildings and is the author of the Petronas Twin Towers (452 metres) in Kuala Lumpur, and Torre de Cristal (249.5 metres), the second highest building in Madrid.

The Iberdrola Tower will be 165 metres in height and have 41 floors covering 50,000 square metres in a triangle prism with slightly curved sides. It is located in plot 204 of Abandoibarra PERI redesign plan, in the Abando district, which is home to a host of office towers in Bilbao.

