



## Interview

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Passionate about foreign cultures and international trade, Maider Arosteguy led a career in Europe and Latin America as an organisational consultant supporting leaders, before becoming an opposition municipal councillor in Biarritz in 2008.

As the Departmental Councillor for Pyrénées Atlantique and President of the Trans Pyrenean Atlantic Conference, cross-border issues are at the heart of her commitment.

She was elected Mayor of Biarritz in 2020, at the head of a municipal team of the Republican right and the centre. Participatory democracy is part of the DNA of its commitment.

On a personal level, she is interested in history and cinema. She regularly practises Pilates.

**-Biarritz has the status of an imperial city. Here Empress Eugénie and Napoleon III built their residence, and Biarritz welcomed Queen Victoria and King Alphonse XIII of Spain ... Who among today's celebrities likes to visit the city?**

-Biarritz is a cosmopolitan city that attracts young and old and all social classes.

The attractiveness of Biarritz is its tranquillity, and its living environment, particularly appreciated by celebrities and business leaders who find serenity and tranquillity here, in all discretion and with the authenticity that characterises it.

The paparazzi are not part of the landscape. The landscape of Biarritz is the ocean, mountains, gastronomy, culture and conviviality of the Biarrots and the Basques.

**-What are the key figures for the city's economy?**

-Biarritz welcomed leisure and business tourism with more than three million visitors in the summer of 2022. This year there will be around a hundred congresses, fairs and seminars.

Biarritz also lives through its international festivals such as Time to Love, Latin American Culture Festival, Wheels and Waves, Invitation to Travel and Fipadoc. In June 2023, the city will organise Biarritz Only Comedy, which is a new festival of humour, and the Biarritz International Film Festival. This cultural program contributes to the development of the local economy throughout the year, particularly related to hoteliers, restaurateurs and other local merchants.

Biarritz is also about innovative companies, particularly through French Tech present in the area, the Connector and soon Villa Fal, for fashion and design companies.

In 2022, 8,107,000 visitors visited Biarritz (+17.56% compared to 2021). Among them, 65% are French and 35% are foreigners (TOP 3: Spain / UK / Germany).



## Maider Arosteguy

Mayor of Biarritz

«In Biarritz, the art of living has its full meaning, and the art of the table and eating well are not empty words»

**-Do you feel the impact of the geopolitical situation and the economic crisis on the tourism market? Who are your main tourists now?**

-Despite a still uncertain start to the year for event activity due to Covid, room rentals saw a significant increase in 2022 thanks to the lifting of administrative restrictions

in March for gatherings, shows and demonstrations. The shows and certain professional events postponed could be held from March under «normal» conditions.

We have witnessed the return of American, British, Spanish, Italian, Swiss and German customers.

And we saw record occupancy rates in 2022 across all hotel

categories, with particularly strong growth being felt in the 4\* segment.

**-How many universities are there in Biarritz? Are there many foreign students from Europe and elsewhere?**

-The city has a photography BTS, an audio-visual BTS, a hotel school offering BTS Tourism and BTS Mana-

gement in hospitality and catering, and a higher art school.

**-What are the major upcoming projects for the city?**

-The City of Biarritz will invest in a new residential area on the Aguilera sports plateau and a sports training and performance centre.

The city is also investing in



the environment with the pedestrianisation of the city centre during the holiday period and the quality of bathing water.

The city is committed to the quality of life and environmental protection. Our plans include the construction of new sidewalks and roads, as well as the implementation of a program for the reconstruction of municipal buildings in the context of energy saving.

Among our main projects is the launch of the Polo Training and Sports Excellence Center.

The city welcomes and supports new events such as the Biarritz Only Comedy, the Biarritz International Film Festival and the return of the Casetas.

Moreover, Biarritz will set up a foundation to attract patrons with the aim to renovate the Biarritz heritage. The first project will be the imperial chapel.

### Throughout the year, Biarritz hosts many internationally renowned cultural and sporting events, including

▶▶ **BIARRITZ JAPAN FESTIVAL**, Halle d'Iraty, March 25-26, 2023  
First edition of this event is oriented around the themes of traditional and contemporary Japan, video games, manga, cosplay, web culture, high-tech and board games.

▶▶ **OCEAN FEST**, Halle d'Iraty, March 31, 2023 (from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m.).

The Blue Force association, co-founded by Hugo Clément and the artist Worakls, presents the first edition of its flagship event: the Ocean Fest, bringing together actors and citizens of the Basque Country around a common ecological commitment. All funds raised during the event will be donated to the NGO SEA SHEPHERD.

The artists Mosimann, Polo and Pan, Silly Boy Blue, Synapson, The Avenir, Vitalic and Worakls, answered the call voluntarily and will be present at the Ocean Fest.

▶▶ Wind, Stars and Sea exhibition, Bellevue, April 8 - May 3

▶▶ Quiksilver Maïder Arosteguy, surfing competition, Grande Plage, April 8-10

▶▶ Teenage rampage, European Skateboarding competition, Skatepark, April 21-23

▶▶ Biarritz Marathon, May 7

▶▶ Malandain Ballet Biarritz, National Choreographic Center, May 11-14

▶▶ Biarritz Only Comedy, humor festival, June 15-17 = NEW

▶▶ Les Casetas - Côte des Basques, June 22-25

▶▶ Wheels & Waves, June 21-25

▶▶ Biarritz International Film Festival «New Waves», June 28 - July 2. NEW

▶▶ Time to love dance, September 7-17

▶▶ Biarritz Latin America Festival, September 25 - October 1

▶▶ Festival Biarritz en Lumières and Christmas Market, December 16 - January 1.

**-How has the standard of living changed over the years? What is the inflation rate? How much have housing prices increased?**

-The inflation rate was 5.20% in 2022. Over one year, housing prices increased by 10%. The average price today per m<sup>2</sup> in Biarritz is €8796.

**-If we talk about gastronomy in France, what can Biarritz offer its tourists?**

-In Biarritz, the art of living has its full meaning, and the art of the table and eating well are not empty words. Local products from the land and the ocean are in the spotlight thanks to the privileged position of Biarritz. Traditional restaurants or brasseries, seafood restaurants, bodegas, local products, simple and refined or more trendy cuisine, and prestigious sites for more classic dinners such as the Hôtel du Palais.

There is something for all budgets and all desires. In this city that has renowned starred restaurants, good products can be found at the Halles - which is open every morning- and in the shops. Delicatessens, cheese makers, greengrocers, pastry chefs, chocolate makers, caterers ... There is no shortage of addresses of excellence.

Our specialties: Axoa, Bayonne ham, Basque cake, mouchou, kanouga seafood, squid and Ossau Iraty cheese.

**-Concerning the development of the city, in which areas do you think you have already achieved good results and what will you continue to do as mayor of the city?**

-It is essential for me to be constantly attentive to the expectations of my fellow citizens and to be able to co-construct solutions with them for their daily lives. Mayors naturally embody this local democracy to which the French are so attached.

This method seems to be the only one that can restore voters' confidence in politics: being and doing it, rather than appearing to be it. ≡

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