

## Who are the Basques?

The Basques are an ancient sea-faring people who have resided in the western Pyrenees of France and Spain for thousands of years. They are one of the few remaining cultures in Europe that preceded the migration that brought those who would later become the Romans, Germans, Spanish, and the rest of modern Europe. The Basques speak a language – Euskara – unrelated to any other language in the world. In fact, English and Spanish are more closely related to each other than Basque is to any known language. Through the centuries, the Basques have preserved their unique language and culture.



The seven Basque provinces.

Today, the Basque Country, or Euskal Herria, is composed of seven provinces which are arranged in three distinct parts. Three provinces in Spain – Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, and Araba – compose the Basque Autonomous Community. The historically Basque province of Navarre forms its own community within Spain. The last three provinces – Zuberoa, Lapurdi, and Behe-Nafarroa – lie on the French side of the border.

## The Basques & New Mexico

The Basques first came to the area that would later become New Mexico with the Spaniards who conquered and settled the region in the late 1500s. Many, such as Juan de Oñate, played key roles during the colonial period. The cultural heritage of the Basques in New Mexico is apparent in many of the family names found in this area:

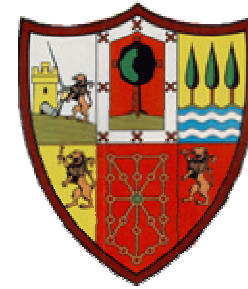
Abeyta, Aguirre, Anaya, Anchondo, Apodaca, Anza, Archuleta, Arena, Arellano, Armendariz, Armenta, Aroztegui, Arriaga, Azcárraga, Baca, Barrera, Cárdenas, Casados, Chivira, Echavarria, Escobar, Esquibel, Etxurraga, Garibay, Hechevarria, Heredia, Hurtado, Iturbe, Iturralde, Jaramillo, Jauregui, Larrañaga, Larragoite, Lizarraga, Mendiola, Mendoza, Mondragón, Montoya, Nuanes, Ochoa, Olachea, Olives, Oñate, Orozco, Perea, Perieri, Quintana, Quintero, Renteria, Ruiz, Salazar, Segura, Salcedo, Solana, Solano, Suazo, Tapia, Trevino, Ulibarri, Ulloa, Urbán, Urioste, Vazquez, Vizarraga, Velasquez, Velarde, Vizcaino, Ybarra, Zabala, Zamarripa, Zertuche

More recently, many young Basques immigrated to the American West, including Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, California – and New Mexico – to find work as shearers. There was even a Basque Boarding House in Grants serving the shepherding community.



The lauburu - literally "four heads" - an ancient Basque symbol.

## A Basque Club in New Mexico



The Basque Coat-of-Arms.

Today, Basque culture is continuing a revival begun when Franco died in 1975. New Mexico is unique in the United States in that it has been witness to both eras of Basque immigration: the original Spanish conquest and the more recent appearance of the Basque shepherd. In order to recognize, preserve and celebrate this unique cultural heritage, we have formed a Basque organization in New Mexico with this purpose. We plan to promote Basque culture through cinema, cuisine, music, guest lectures and trips to the Basque Country. We hope that you and your family and friends will join us on this exciting journey and become a part of this new club!

### For Further Reading about the Basques and the Basques in New Mexico, see:

*The Basques* by Roger Collins

*Portraits of Basques in the New World*  
by Richard Etulain and Jeronima Echeverria

*The Basque History of the World*  
by Mark Kurlansky

Buber's Basque Page:  
[www.buber.net/Basque/](http://www.buber.net/Basque/)