

BASQUE IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

... "From Ellis Island to the whole world" ...



Ellis Island Museum and venue of the exhibition

The exhibition "Hidden in Plain Sight: the Basques" will be inaugurated in February 2010 at the Immigration Museum, Ellis Island, New York, and will run until April. The aim of the exhibition, housed in a location visited by thousands of tourists on a daily basis, will be to present the language, customs and values of the Basques, as well as to explain the reasons why they emigrated to the United States. Therefore, the exhibition aims to give visitors an idea of the influence Basques have had on the history of the world.

The choice of Ellis Island as the location for this exhibition is not an accident. The history of this island in New York is closely linked to the history of migration. This was the entry point for more than twelve million immigrants who had left the old world in search of the golden future America offered during the period 1892–1954. The story told on Ellis Island is one of separations, struggles, pain and hope, in memory of all the immigrants who brought their language and culture to the New World. This is a unique place, where both sides of the Atlantic converge in a location which was the destination dreamt of by thousands of men and women throughout the world.

It is estimated that a visit to this six-room exhibition will take an average of 30 minutes. Those interested in visiting the show will find narrative texts on several subjects dealing with Basque history and culture, audiovisual recordings, photographs of yes-

teryear and today, historical artifacts, Basque art and an interactive section for children.

At the beginning of the exhibition, visitors will learn about the Basque men and women who left the Basque Country behind to go to the United States. The oral testimony of Lucy Garate, a Basque emigrant who arrived at Ellis Island in 1920 and who currently lives in Boise, will be a major feature of the exhibition. Visitors are then offered the possibility of gaining an in-depth knowledge of the Basque language, its magical sounds, history and culture, followed by a carousel of memorabilia, traditions and art of Basques in the world. Arriving now at the heart of the exhibition, this switches from a personal view of the Basque people to a more a universal perspective. Visitors can admire the world the Basques left behind them and see for themselves the terrible consequences of the Franco dictatorship depicted in disturbing images of the bombing of Gernika. There is also a reproduction of the work that Pablo Picasso painted as a tribute to the victims of the bombing. Lastly, visitors will enjoy the images and photographs of Basques in the United States, as well as an exhibition of contemporary photographs and artefacts of the Basque Country.

Those who do not have the opportunity to enjoy this exhibition, the only one of its kind in the world, should know that it will be on show during the Jaialdi of the United States in Boise, Idaho, during the summer of 2010.