

Giselle Moulia

## Udaleku Scholarship Writing

1. Explain the impact that Udaleku has had on your identity as a Basque teenager.

“What’s basque?” The dreaded question. I used to give a vague answer, often mentioning France and Spain but never going into much detail. After 4 years of Basque camp, however, I jump at the opportunity to brag about my culture’s food, language, history, and sports, as well as to recount stories about my fun experiences at Udaleku. Udaleku is the reason for this deep fascination and pride in my culture. Since I first attended camp four years ago, I have grown to love being Basque and all the things that come along with it. From learning to play the txistu - which I am admittedly horrible at - to learning about the complicated language and dances, Udaleku has opened my eyes to how rich the Basque culture truly is.

Throughout my years at camp I have noticed and experienced firsthand how the older campers welcome the new ones with open arms each year. My early years at Udaleku were spent looking up to the older campers and in some ways idolizing them. They were always surrounded by friends and somehow knew all the dances, so I could never imagine one day being as cool as them. It shocks me that I am now in this position that I once idolized, and I am amazed at how fast my years at camp have passed before my eyes. I am so excited to have the opportunity to welcome and hopefully inspire younger campers. After this year’s Udaleku, my journey with Basque camp will hopefully continue as an aide. Aiding camp has always

been a goal of mine because I hope to help the campers learn to embrace their Basque culture, just as my aides did for me.

Another unique aspect of Udaleku is the housing. Each year, I have had a new living experience and have met many new people who have helped me gain new perspectives. By living under one roof, I have had the opportunity to become close with people whom I probably would not have been close with otherwise. Each year I have been fortunate enough to have extremely inviting host parents, who I form a relationship with over the course of two weeks. They have all been very different from each other and this has taught me to have an open perspective when meeting new people. Furthermore, my host parents have managed to teach me a lesson or a new skill each year. For example, in Elko my host dad taught me and the other girls I was housed with how to carve safely. In San Francisco, as a hostess, I learned the importance of sharing and adapting my life to welcome new people. In Salt Lake City, I got to experience what it was like having younger sisters and living with farm animals, which taught me a great deal of patience. Finally, in Chino my host mom taught me how to cook. Not only have each of these experiences taught me valuable skills, but they have also shown me new perspectives and helped me understand others' views. Living in liberal San Francisco, I have only ever seen one side of our society. At Udaleku, however, I get to learn about other people's views and see the world through another lens. This is truly invaluable insight and I do not think that I would be as open as I am today if I had not stayed in different towns, with various families, through Udaleku.

However, my favorite part about Udaleku is that it has blessed me with best friends that I will cherish for life. My first year at camp was Elko, when I was 11 years old. I had

always heard my older sister raving about her previous experiences at Udaleku, and I was admittedly skeptical that it was as incredible as she had always described it. At first I struggled to make new friends, but throughout camp I made a few good friends that made my first year great. It was not until my second year of camp, however, that I was truly immersed in Basque camp and making lifelong friends. Now, as I am preparing to attend my fifth year of camp, I am coming in with more friends than I could have imagined my first year of camp. Friends that I cannot envision my life without and have managed to keep in contact with through social media and by attending various Basque events. Perhaps even more exciting, I know that in my final year I will meet even more incredible people and hopefully become as close to them as I am with others. Udaleku has allowed us to meet and bond over a shared understanding and love for our culture, and I will be forever grateful for that.

Udaleku is what I look forward to most every year, and it has somehow allowed me to channel my love for my culture into two weeks of each summer. Udaleku has introduced me to some of my best friends, taught me the importance of embracing and nurturing my knowledge of my culture, and - most importantly - it has opened my eyes to how fortunate I am to call myself Basque.

2. What advice would you give to students attending Udaleku for the first time?

Anyone attending Udaleku is incredibly fortunate, but what you gain from this opportunity is entirely dependent on you. You can choose to stick with the people you are

already comfortable with and you can approach the situation with a set perspective on the Basque culture, but that undermines the entire point of the Udaleku experience. Therefore, the biggest piece of advice I could give to a new camper is to push yourself to step out of your comfort zone, whether that be trying a new sport or meeting new people. This is a key part of Udaleku because these incidents are the ones that you will remember for the rest of your life. Be excited to try new things such as learning new dances, playing unfamiliar instruments, learning a new language, and most importantly creating long-lasting friendships with people from a different place and background. Push yourself to walk up to a group of strangers and introduce yourself, because some of those strangers may turn out to be your best friends for the rest of your life. Middle school friends and high schools friends don't always last forever, but you will always be Basque and your Basque friends are a rare constant in a constantly changing life. You will most likely know the people you meet at Udaleku for your entire life, so take advantage of this opportunity and use it to create strong relationships with your fellow campers, aides, host family, teachers, and anyone else you may encounter on this adventure.