

Barcelona



Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, is a cosmopolitan Mediterranean city that incorporates in its urban street pattern Roman remains, medieval districts and the most beautiful examples of Modernism and 20th century avant-garde art. It is no wonder that the emblematic buildings of Catalan architects Antoni Gaudí and Lluís Domènech i Montaner were declared to be **World Heritage Sites** by UNESCO.

Of Roman origin, Barcelona's long history and economic dynamism have provided it with an impressive cultural heritage, shown in the conservation of its rich historic and artistic heritage and in the encouragement of the newest artistic trends. Its long cultural agenda will lead the visitor through museums, exhibitions, outdoor sculptures... and an extensive calendar of music, theatre, and dance.

Popular culture also has a presence in this city, which does not forget deeply-rooted traditions, such as the **Mercè Festival**, or the holiday celebrations in the districts of Gràcia, Sants, or Poble Nou, all excellent opportunities to get to know the more festive side of Barcelona.

Tradition and modernity are also responsible for shaping its innovative and imaginative cuisine, which is based on organically grown produce, fresh fish, sausages and olive oil. Home-made pastries, and sparkling wines will round off a merely superficial approach to Barcelona's culinary culture.



To take a stroll through the streets of Barcelona is to be surprised at every step. Pedestrian streets in the old districts, green spaces, and a splendid waterfront filled with modern structures all reflect the city's aim of integration. Barcelona has managed to exalt its past without forgetting its commitment to the future. The city has some extraordinary infrastructures dedicated to hosting seminars, symposiums and international competitions. Its exceptional communications network, its Mediterranean climate and its great number of tourist attractions make of Barcelona an important business city. Business facilities, as well as conference and exhibition centers, can accommodate the widest variety of initiatives.

The visitor, whether on business or pleasure, will enjoy Barcelona's Mediterranean character, which can be clearly felt on the **Costa del Garraf** as well as the **Maresme coast**. In addition, the city has beautiful urban beaches, marinas, and seafront golf courses. Nature lovers will not need to travel far to be able to hike through the hills that are part of the coastal mountain range and the **Catalan Pyrenees**.



Art and culture

Barcelona, an authentic open-air museum

The variety and wealth of Barcelona's heritage provide a number of attractive routes through its various districts. This way, the traveler will get to know the many faces of the city.

Its early city center, which was surrounded by walls during Roman times, makes up what today is the **Gothic Quarter**. Narrow streets, with quiet squares and attractive corners, are home to an abundant collection of Gothic buildings, both civil and religious. Surrounding Barcelona's impressive Cathedral, medieval palaces emerge, such as Casa dels Canonges, La Pia Almoina, and Casa d'Ardiaca. The Plaça del Rei brings together another labyrinth of marvelous buildings, such as the Palau Reial Major, the Chapel of Santa Àgata, and the City History Museum. The Plaça Sant Jaume holds the Palau de la Generalitat (headquarters of the Catalan government) and the City Hall, or Casa de la Ciutat. We must not forget the church of La Mercè, patron saint of Barcelona.

Next to the Gothic Quarter, the **Ribera district**, also of Medieval origin, begins. In its origins, it brought together traders and seagoing people, but with the passage of time many magnificent, small palaces were built as well. Some of them have been converted to house important city museums. Examples of this are the Palace of the Marquises of Llió, (Museum of Clothing and Textiles) the Palau Nadal (Barbier-Müller Museum of pre-Columbian Art), and the Palau Aguilar (nowadays the Picasso Museum), to name just a few. Because of Barcelona's focus on integration, it is possible to travel in time in a matter of a few metres, from the Gothic structures of the church of Santa Maria del Mar, to the modernist Palau de la Música Catalana, a concert hall.



The urban development of the central area of Barcelona was defined, towards the end of the 19th century, by the Eixample (urban expansion). An extensive grid, with large avenues and chamfered corners, joined the irregular layouts of old districts and outlying towns to the surrounding hills. The emerging Catalan bourgeoisie chose this place to build its mansions and palaces, following the most daring principles of Modernism. Architects such as Gaudí, Domènech i Montaner or Puig i Cadafalch relied on the help of master craftsmen to fill the streets of Barcelona with fantasy. Works by Gaudí, such as Park Güell, the Palau Güell, and Casa Milà "La Pedrera", as well as Domènech i Montaner's Palau de la Música Catalana, and the Sant Pau Hospital have been declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. The temple of the Sagrada Família (the Holy Family), and houses such as Casa Lleó Morera, Casa Amatller, and Casa Batlló are just a few of the many modernist gems treasured by the city.

One of the main arteries of the historic quarter, La Rambla, leads to the Mediterranean Sea, and it is one of the best places to catch the rhythm of the city. The visitor is led through its different sections, from the Romanesque church of Santa Anna, to the bird and flower stalls, passing gorgeous examples of Baroque and Renaissance architecture on the way. The Palau Moja, the church of Betlem and the Santa Creu Hospital serve as guides. There are other centres of cultural activity and daily life in this area, such as the Palau de la Virreina, (now a gallery), the Boqueria Market and the Liceu Opera House.



Barcelona overlooks the sea, and it has a waterfront that encompasses many different artistic styles. Les Drassanes, formerly a dockyard and now home to the Maritime Museum, and the Llotja del Mar are part of the medieval port facilities. Arcaded houses lead to the Ciutadella Park, the Olympic Village and the Port Olímpic. Beaches, piers and an impressive array of museums and leisure centers (such as the Aquarium, the 3D IMAX Theatre, the Colon viewing point, etc.) make Barcelona's seaport a cosmopolitan place, full of life.

Some of these modern facilities are the inheritance from the 1992 Olympics. Their mark can also be seen on the hill at Montjuïc, beside the monumental work from the 1929 World Exhibition. The castle of Montjuïc, (now the Army Museum) takes over this symbolic hill, where true gems of Barcelona's architecture can be found. The Plaça d'Espanya, the Magic Fountain, the Palau Nacional (with the medieval collection of the Catalan National Museum of Art - MNAC) and the Olympic Ring are a few of its most important works. The Olympic Stadium, the Calatrava Tower, the Sant Jordi Sports Centre and the INEF (Catalonia National Institute of Physical Education) Pavilion, built by Ricardo Bofill, rise among gorgeous gardens.

Barcelona's culture is not only evident in its buildings, parks and outdoor sculptures, but also in its countless museum collections. Artists of the stature of Picasso, Miró, Tàpies or Gaudí, have museums entirely devoted to collect their works. Artistic pieces from all periods are kept in the city's History Museum, the Museum of the History of Catalonia, the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art. Many other institutions also bring the avant-garde movement to the eyes of the general public, through permanent and temporary collections. Sometimes the container is as important as the contents it preserves, and, in the case of buildings and museums, this is true of the collections found in the beautiful structures that the Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) and Caixa Forum. The museums of Barcelona, however, cover a wider variety of subjects; namely: archaeology, zoology, science, ethnology, pre-Colombian art and more. A large number of exhibition halls round off this rich and diverse cultural selection. Barcelona's City Council has created the Barcelona Card especially for visitors; it is valid for 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 days. Its main attractions are free transport and great discounts on entertainment, museums, and even restaurants. The visitor can also get an Articket, which is a multi-pass allowing entry to the MNAC, the MACBA (Barcelona Contemporary Art Museum, built by architect Richard Meier), the Joan Miró Foundation, the Antoni Tàpies Foundation, the CCCB, and Caixa Catalunya Cultural Centre, located in "La Pedrera", all at a discounted price.



What to See and What to Do:

La Sagrada Família - La Sagrada Família Cathedral

The grand expiatory temple.

In 1883 the brilliant Gaudí agreed to direct this work, succeeding Francisco de Paula. The artist worked on it until his death. Work to complete this grand church continues still today. The first architect to work on this project planned a Neogothic building. However, following his death, Gaudí took over, respecting the original layout of the work, but soon leaving the mark of his personality and way of doing things. He finished only the chapel of San José, the crypt and the door of El Nacimiento. The façades and the entire exterior show extensive decorative elements in bright colours. The main front of La Pasión has a cryptogram.

Must see.....

The door of El Nacimiento, the main front of La Pasión and, in general, the exterior of the building.

Casa-Museo Gaudí

The Güell park, designed by Antoni Gaudí, is the place where you find the architect's house museum. Francesc Berenguer, his disciple, was commissioned to build the building, where Gaudí lived for 20 years.

The museum, inaugurated in 1963, contains the works of art and personal belongings of the architect, as well as works by Mir, Gimeno, Picasso, Mani, Jujol, Berenguer, Moisés and Oslé Matamala, amongst others. The house is surrounded by a garden where you can find lots of grilles designed by Gaudí, as well as a surrounding walkway with parabolic arches designed by the architect himself.

Treat yourself to a trip on the **Sadko**, a beautiful old schooner, to admire the Barcelona skyline at sunset. In good weather there are cruises virtually every evening, departing at 7p.m. from Moll d'Espana. The ship can also be chartered for morning and lunchtime cruises for groups of 15 plus. For more information on Barcelona and the rest of Spain, please visit
Reservations required

www.goletasadko.com 

The **Font Magica** (Magic Fountains) in front of the Palau Nacional de Montjuic – a collection of fountains that change color and dance to music. Evenings from 9p.m. – 11:30p.m.

Located in the spectacular, but less well-known **Palau Baro de Quadras** you will find the **Casa Asia** cultural center, with its pleasant Café Zen. There are two magnificent art nouveau halls to see. You can also go onto the rooftop terrace to admire the views.

www.casaasia.es 

The interactive **Museum of Sciences on the Tibidabo** invites visitors to enjoy a hands-on learning experience. Acclaimed as the finest science museum in Europe, it's a fascinating and entertaining experience for visitors of all ages.

www.fundacio.lacaixa.es 

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