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## GUIDE BOOKS AND WEB RESOURCES

### THE BEST GUIDEBOOKS

- **Time Out Barcelona Shortlist 6th Edition** - unbeatable!
- **Lonely Planet Pocket Barcelona 3rd Edition** – more concise but also handy
- **Pocket Rough Guide Barcelona** - packed with great info for all budgets!
- **Fodor's Barcelona** written by George Semler, a 30-year resident of the city
- **Insight City Guide Barcelona** - strong on history, architecture, culture, art.
- **Cadogan's Barcelona** - great general guide also strong on history and culture.
- **Let's Go Budget Barcelona** - for the young and those on a very tight budget
- **BarcelonaWalks** - for wonderful walking tours, available through the author's personal web site ([www.georgesemler.com](http://www.georgesemler.com))
- **National Geographic's Barcelona 3rd Edition** ([shop.nationalgeographic.com](http://shop.nationalgeographic.com))

### WEB RESOURCES

- [www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com) - official tourist office site - excellent!
- [www.bcn.cat](http://www.bcn.cat) - official municipal site
- [www.barcelona-tourist-guide.com](http://www.barcelona-tourist-guide.com) - the essential tourist guide for Barcelona
- [www.guiadelociobcn.com](http://www.guiadelociobcn.com) - for what's going on during your visit
- [www.softguides.com/barcelona](http://www.softguides.com/barcelona) - ditto; also hotel booking
- [www.barcelonahotels.es](http://www.barcelonahotels.es) - online booking service
- [www.rutadelmodernisme.com](http://www.rutadelmodernisme.com) - dedicated to Modernist (Art Nouveau) architecture

### TRAVEL PLANNING SERVICES

Exclusive Travel Planning Services by **Iberian Traveler & Maribel's Guides**. Contact Maribel to arrange a custom itinerary for your trip to Spain, Portugal, Paris or southwest France.

Travel planning services are fee based, depending on the length of your trip. The fee includes the preparation of a customized, day-to-day itinerary based on the client's specific interests/travel style/budget, customized sightseeing, dining and shopping guides for each destination, booking of all accommodations, making restaurant reservations, securing of performing arts tickets (theater/opera/ballet/flamenco), setting up winery visits, cooking classes, personal guide services or special day tours, car rentals and consultation by email or phone.

USA Tel: 206.861.9008 / 206.364.6723

## ARRIVING IN BARCELONA

### TRAIN VERSUS PLANE

It used to be that the quickest way to get to Barcelona from Madrid was to fly, but Renfe's non-stop AVE trains take you from city center to city center in as little as 2hrs 30mins. The slowest AVE, with 5 stops, still only takes 3hrs 15mins. Although flight time is only 1 hour 15 minutes, it is less convenient if you do not have a good connecting flight from T4 at Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas.

**Air Europa**, and **Vueling** offer the least expensive fares, often cheaper than traveling by train, but if you are not making a connecting flight, the added time and cost of getting to and from the airport, and the time to clear security, makes taking the train a better option.

Tickets can be purchased online, generally up to 60 days in advance. First class (preferente) tickets on these long distance, high-speed trains include drinks (beer, wine, cordials) and a (decent) meal served at your seat, cars with a 2-1 seating configuration and access to the first class lounge in the Madrid-Atocha station, or in Barcelona-Sants if traveling to Madrid. Check the current schedule at: [www.renfe.com](http://www.renfe.com).

### TRANSFER FROM THE AIRPORT INTO THE CITY

Aeropuerto de Barcelona-El Prat is located 12 km southwest of the city, with tourist offices, banks, and luggage storage ("consigna"), car rental offices (Atesa/National, Avis, Hertz, Europcar) and ATMs in terminals. Shopaholics will enjoy the great duty free stores, including Loewe and Façonnable ([www.aena-aeropuertos.es](http://www.aena-aeropuertos.es)).

### TAXIS

Barcelona has a fleet of more than 11,000 taxis. Black and yellow are the official colors. An airport run to a downtown hotel will cost around 30€, including supplements. There's an extra surcharge of 1€ for each bag carried in the trunk and a 4,20€ supplement to and from the airport. There is an additional supplement of 3,10€ between the hours of 8:00 pm and 8:00 am.

Plenty of taxis available in front of the international arrivals terminal, but in the summer, when several charter jumbos arrived at the same time, the line can be very long. When traveling alone I take the Aerobús from the airport, but for an early morning departure from El Prat, I take a taxi from the hotel. Count on a 20-25 minute ride. Note that some taxis now accept credit cards. UBER is currently banned in Spain ([www.taxibarcelona.cat](http://www.taxibarcelona.cat)).

### PRIVATE TRANSFERS

In addition to the standard private transfers services currently available in Barcelona; Abaser, Autocars Esteve, Blai Limousines SL, Grup Limousines, Trips For VIPS and The Golden Wheels, all of which can be booked online before you leave home, CABIFY can be booked in advance online or ordered when you arrive using their iPhone or Android app ([www.cabify.es](http://www.cabify.es)).

## AEROBÚS 1 & 2

Simple, easy, inexpensive! Aerobus A1 leaves from T1 every 5 minutes between 7:30 am and 10:20 pm. Aerobus A2 leaves from T2 every 10 minutes between 7:00 am and 11:00 pm. The trip takes about 35 minutes to reach Plaça de Catalunya. The service operates 365 days a year. Tickets are €5,90 one-way, €10,20 round-trip (valid up to 15 days). Children under 4 ride free. You can catch a taxi, or walk, if your hotel is located near Plaça de Catalunya.

Aerobús A1 departs Plaça Catalunya for the airport every 5 minutes between 6:50 am and 9:45 pm and every 10 minutes between 5:00 and 6:40 am, and from 9:50 pm to 12:30 am daily. Aerobús A2 departs Plaça Catalunya every 10 minutes between 7:05 am and 10:25 pm, every 20 minutes from 5:30 to 6:50 am, and 10:40 pm to 12:30 am daily ([www.aerobusbcn.com](http://www.aerobusbcn.com)).

## TRAIN

The ride into the city takes about 22 minutes from the airport to Barcelona-Sants station and 27 minutes to Passeig de Gràcia. Train service begins at 5:42 in the morning and ends at 11:38 pm, departing every 30 minutes. While not the speediest option, the train is most definitely the cheapest, at €2 for a single ticket but even less, if you purchase a combined ticket for later use. Check Rodalies de Catalunya for the train schedules and tafias ([www20.gencat.cat](http://www20.gencat.cat)). However, I don't feel that a savings of a few euros is worth the extra time and tedious walk with luggage from T1 ([www.fgc.net](http://www.fgc.net)).

## CITY TRANSPORTATION

### TAXI SERVICE

Taxis can be hailed at the official taxi stops and sometimes on the street. Taxis must charge a supplement for each piece of luggage carried in the trunk, plus supplements to go to and from the airport and train stations. Please make sure to check these supplements on the information panel, which legally must be displayed on the side window of your taxi to make sure that you're not overcharged. Ask for a receipt, a "recibo" or "rebut" (in Catalán) to keep your taxi driver honest (which the vast majority are). Tips are not required or expected, but most just "round up" to the nearest euro ([www.taxibarcelona.cat](http://www.taxibarcelona.cat)).

### AUTOBUS

Special day cards are valid for public transportation; the city bus and metro (TMB), the local train (FGC), the tram and regional train (Rodalies de Catalunya) and can be used to and from the airport. The **Hola BCN!** travel card allows an unlimited number of journeys over 2 to 5 days. The 2-day card is 14€, the 3 day card is 20,50€, and a 4-day card is 26,50€. Your best value is the 5-day card for 32€. For more information and current pricing see *Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona* ([www.tmb.cat](http://www.tmb.cat)).

## METRO

Trains run from 5:00 am until midnight Monday-Thursday and 5:00 am to 2:00 am Friday, Saturday, Sunday and the evening before a holiday (January 1, June 24, August 15 and September 25) and from 5:00 am to 11:00 pm on December 24 ([www.tmb.cat](http://www.tmb.cat)). Beware of pickpockets.

## MONTJUÏC FUNICULAR

The Funicular runs November-February from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, March-May and in October until 7:00 pm. and June-September until 9:00 pm. Roundtrip tickets are 11,50€ for adults, 8,40€ for children from 4 to 12. One-way fare is 7,80€ for adults and 6,00€ for children ([www.telefericdemontjuic.cat](http://www.telefericdemontjuic.cat))

## ORIENTATION

Pick up a Barcelona cultural activities guide at one of the city tourist offices. It will give you listings of exhibits, theater, music, festivals and dance. Very handy! Also pick up the monthly cultural calendar, **Butxaca** ([www.butxaca.com](http://www.butxaca.com)), which will give you a day-by-day listing of cultural events, concerts, lectures, recitals, etc.

The main tourist office is located underground on the El Corte Inglés department store side of Plaça de Catalunya, open 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Other branches can be found the Ramblas, 99, next to the Ayuntamiento (city hall) at Plaça Sant Jaume in the Barri Gòtic, Sants train station and El Prat airport. The offices are filled with helpful brochures and a pleasant staff. On the Passeig de Gracia, in the Palau Robert, you'll find the regional tourist office for all of Catalunya.

There are also free tourist guides published quarterly and available at your hotel, such as **Barcelona Style** ([www.bookstyle.net](http://www.bookstyle.net)) and **See Barcelona** ([www.seebarcelona.com](http://www.seebarcelona.com)) guides, with lots of ads, but not all of the restaurant selections are tops.



If you read some Spanish, the weekly **Guía del Ocio** ([www.guiadelocio.com](http://www.guiadelocio.com)), similar to Pariscope (free online), comes out every Friday and lists what's playing in theaters, cinemas, museums, art galleries, and has terrific restaurant and nightlife sections. In the back you'll find a small English language section.

## TOP SIGHTS

### ARCHITECT ANTONIO GAUDÍ'S MODERNIST WORKS

#### THE CATALÁN ART NOUVEAU

*As the NY Times article "Antonio Gaudí's Visions in Brick and Stone" states, "there is no other city that honors and, indeed, so identifies with the work of a single architect. Gaudí's buildings are a magnet for the cultivated and the curious; even sightseers who usually never visit buildings make certain to see at least the great, unfinished church of the Sagrada Familia and the Güell Park and Palace".*

#### LA SAGRADA FAMILIA

Carrer Mallorca 401, also known as the Expiatory Temple of the Holy Family, *La Sagrada Família* is Gaudí's wildly visionary, unfinished temple, which began as a duicean project in 1882 and taken over by Gaudí in 1883. He continued working on it until his tragic death in 1926. It was the dream and obsession of his life, and became a symbol of the city, but remains unfinished after 131 years. The work continues and according to the most optimistic estimates, it should be finished by 2022.

Services in the Basilica are held in Spanish on weekdays and Saturday at 9:00 am, and in Catalan on weekdays at 8:15 pm and 7:30 pm on Saturdays. Services on Sundays & holy days are in Spanish at 9:00 am, 11:45 am and 8:15 pm, and 10:30 am, 1:00 pm and 6:30 pm in Catalan. Entrance is from Carrer Sardenya.

The Basilica is now open November-February from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, and in April-September from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm. Open in March and October from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm. Open December 25 and 26, January 1 and 6 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Crypt is open Monday-Saturday from 9:00 to 10:00 am and 6:00 to 9:00 pm. Open Sunday and holidays from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and 6:00 to 9:00 pm.



Admission is 15,00€, 19,50€ with an audio guide or guided visit. You can include the visit to the towers for an additional 4,50€. Visit to the Basilica is free for children up to 10 years of age, and for Friends of the Church. Bags and backpacks must be checked-in to enter. For 18,50€ you can purchase a combo ticket for the Sagrada Familia and Gaudí House Museum in the Parc Güell ([www.sagradafamilia.cat](http://www.sagradafamilia.cat)).

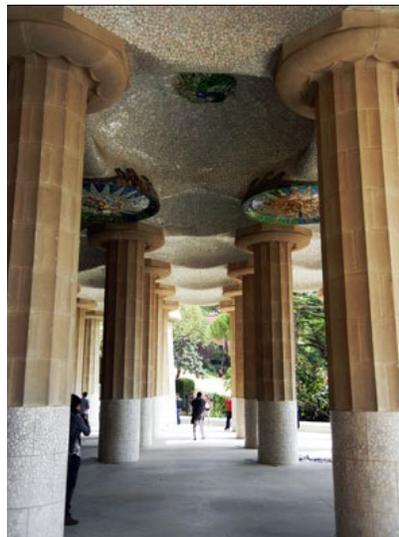
### CASA MUSEU GAUDÍ

You can visit his house/museum October-March from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm and from April-September, 9:00 am to 8:00 pm. Open on December 25, 26, January 1 and 6 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. General admission is 5,50€, 4,50€ for students 11-17. The park encompasses fanciful gatehouses, fountains, arched and elevated walkways and viewing terraces and is open daily ([www.casamuseugaudi.org](http://www.casamuseugaudi.org)).

### PARC GÜELL *his playful 50-acre park*

When Eusebio Güell bought the land in 1900, he planned for Gaudí to create an urban community for the wealthy, a village modeled on English garden suburbs. The project never came to fruition, abandoned in 1914. Sixty housing sites were provided, but only two houses were ever built. The Güell family donated it to the city to be used as a public park. Gaudi lived in the park in what was to have been the porter's pavilion from 1906 until his death ([www.parkguell.cat](http://www.parkguell.cat)).

This makes for a delightful outing, particularly with kids in tow. Open from 8:00 am to 9:30 pm during high season. General tickets are 7€, 4,90€ for children 7 to 12 and seniors over 65.



### PALAU GÜELL

Don Eusebio Güell i Bacigalupi, a prominent nobleman and Gaudí's most important patron, commissioned this mansion, located in the Raval quarter at Carrer Nou de la Rambla, 3, right off Las Ramblas, as a residence for himself and his family. Inside you'll find more than 40 different types of columns, from brick to marble ([palauguell.cat](http://palauguell.cat)).

Open Tuesday-Sunday, April 1-October 31, from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, and November 1-March 31 from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm. Closed Mondays, except public holidays, December 25 and 26, January 1 and 8-24. General admission is 12€, 8€ for students over 17 and EU citizens over 65, 5€ for children from 10 to 17. Free on Sundays from 5:00 to 8:00 pm (summer) and 2:30 to 5:30 pm (winter), April 23, May 18 and September 24. Audio guide included with ticket. Casa Milá

### CASA MILÁ

Gaudí's **La Pedrera** "the stone quarry", is just up the street at Provença, 261, on the corner of Passeig de Gracia. Built between 1906 and 1912, it is one of the most famous buildings in the Modernista period, and an ambitious work by Gaudí. Make sure to visit the top floor apartment and the roof, the **Espai Gaudí**, for an up-close view of the surreal chimneys.



Open Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 10:00 pm, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm. General admission is 20,50€ for adults, 16,50€ for students and disabled, and 10,25€ children 7-12 years of age. Audio guide is now included in the ticket price. Tickets can be purchased online to avoid the long lines ([www.lapedrera.com](http://www.lapedrera.com)).

### CASA BATLLÓ

In the center of the city at Passeig de Gracia, 43, is the masterpiece of Antoni Gaudí. It is now open to the public via a self-guided tour which takes visitors through the magnificent lobby and up the staircase to the Noble floor, the former family residence, the attic, rooftop and chimneys.

Open daily from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, with the last entry at 8:00 pm. Closes at 8:00 pm on May 1, with the last entry at 7:00 pm. General Admission is 21,50€ for adults, 18,50€ for students,

those under 18 and seniors. Children under 7 enter for free. Wheelchairs are available for visiting the upper parts of the house ([www.casabatllo.es](http://www.casabatllo.es)).

### LA MANSANA DE LA DISCORDIA

Note the famous block to the left, as you go north along the Passeig de Gracia. It's called the *Mansana de la Discordia*, or the "block of (architectural) discord", where you'll see three wildly contrasting works in a row from the three great Modernist architects: Gaudí, Domenech I Montaner and Puig I Cadafalch.



## THE BEST OF THE ART MUSEUMS

### MUSEU PICASSO

This gem of a museum is housed in a series of medieval stone mansions on the very atmospheric, mansion-filled Carrer Montcada in La Ribera district, to the east of the Barri Gòtic. The collection is strong on his very early works, produced as young as 12! Plus his blue period, a bit of his rose period and the series based on Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. You can expect long lines, so go early, as it's the city's most popular museum. There is also a Café-restaurant on ground floor with outdoor terrace and an expansive shop selling everything imaginable related to Picasso ([www.museupicasso.bcn.es](http://www.museupicasso.bcn.es))

Tickets for the collection are 11€, collection plus the temporary exhibits is 14€, or 6,50€ for the temporary exhibit only. There is a reduced fare for those 18 to 25 and 65 and older. Admission is free to those under 18, free on Sundays from 3:00 pm, all day on February 12, May 17 and September 24. On our last visit we chose to visit on Sunday afternoon at 5:30 and found no line. The museum offers guided tours in English (included in your entrance ticket) on Thursdays at 6:00, and Saturdays at noon, and is now included in the '6 Museums for 30€ Art Ticket' ([www.articketbcn.org](http://www.articketbcn.org)).

Open Tuesday-Sundays from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm, 9:30 pm on Thursday. Closed on Monday, January 1, May 1, June 24 and December 25. Closes at 2:00 pm on December 24 and 31.

### JOAN MIRÓ FOUNDATION

Also located on Montjuïc, it has wonderful views of the city from its perch in the very middle of Montjuïc Park. It was built in the seventies, designed by Miró's friend Josep Lluís Sert (author of the Maeght Foundation in St-Paul-de-Vence), to house works from 1917 to 1978 donated by the artist.

Displays include paintings, sculptures (Chillida), drawings, tapestries and graphics, also the works of other leading 20th century artists. It's the largest single collection of Miró's works in the world, and as is the Maeght Foundation, the building is filled with airiness and light. Also works by Calder, Henry Moore, Duchamp, Leger, and Max Ernst. Audio guides available. There is a bar/restaurant with an outdoor terrace.



Open October-June, Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, July-September until 8:00 pm. Open Thursdays from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm, and on Sundays and public holidays it's open from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm. Closed Mondays, except for public holidays ([www.bcn.fjmiro.es](http://www.bcn.fjmiro.es)). General admission for the permanent collection plus temporary exhibit is 11€ for adults, groups

and children get in for 7€. Temporary exhibit alone is 7€ for adults. The multimedia guides is 5€. It's also included in the '6 Museums for 30€ Art Ticket' ([www.articketbcn.org](http://www.articketbcn.org)).

*Take the metro to Parallel station and hop on the funicular railway to the vast Montjuïc Park or simply take the Bus Turístic. Here you'll find the MNAC, the Miró Foundation and the Anella Olímpica, the ring of sports installations built for the 1992 Olympics. Make your last stop on Montjuïc for your visit to the Fundació Miró, where you can take the funicular back downtown or hop back on the bus.*

## MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA

This enormous, stunning collection housed in the Palau Nacional consisting of 1,315 works on permanent display includes paintings and sculptures from the medieval period, Germanic, Italian Renaissance and Baroque, including Fra Angelico, Cranach, Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens, Canaletto and the **Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza**. If you're an art lover, this is not to be missed! The Thyssen collection is one of Europe's most valued private collections, given to the autonomous government by the late Baron Heinrich Thyssen, one of the world's great private collectors who sold a portion of his collection to the Spanish government to create the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid and the smaller collection now housed here ([www.mnac.cat](http://www.mnac.cat)).

I like to tour the Gothic side first, as it takes longer to enjoy because it's so chock filled with European masters, including the 17th century Spanish greats and two Goyas. On the Romanesque side you'll see the apses of several Romanesque churches from the Catalonian Pyrenees-one of Europe's greatest collections of Romanesque art. There are also 22 rooms dedicated to the 19th and 20th centuries that have been transported from the Museu d'Art Modern.

Open October-April, Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, and May-September, Tuesday-Saturday until 8:00 pm. Open Sundays and holidays from 10:00 to 3:00. Closed Mondays, except for April 6, June 1 and October 12 (2015). Closed January 1, May 1 and Christmas day.

General Admission is 12€ (valid for 2 days), 2€ for the rooftop viewpoint. Audio guide is 3,50€. Free the 1st Sunday of each month, Saturdays after 3:00, February 12, May 18, September 11 and 24. The joint MNAC/Poble Espanyol ticket costs €18 and includes the permanent and temporary exhibits, but MNAC is also one of six museums included in the 30€ Art Ticket ([www.articketbcn.org](http://www.articketbcn.org)).

## CAIXA FORUM

Located in the Montjuïc area on Avenida Marqués de Comillas near the Placa de Espanya. Check the weekly Guia del Ocio, which you can buy at any newspaper kiosk, in Spanish, but easy to figure out to catch one of their great **free** exhibits. Here I have seen, for nary a penny, the

“Masterpieces from Paris’ Orangerie”, “Turner and Venice”, the works of Fragonard and an exhibit of Henry Moor sculptures ([caixaforumbarcelona](http://caixaforumbarcelona.com)).

Open Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays until 9:00 pm. In July and August it's open until 11:00 pm, and on December 24 and 31 and January 5 it's open until 6:00 in the evening. Closed December 25, January 1 and 6.

### **PALAU DE PEDRALBES**

This stop on the Bus Turístic is a 1929 Italianate palace set back off the upper Diagonal, built as a royal residence surrounded by beautiful gardens and a fountain by Gaudí, and houses two museums. Both are open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Closed Mondays, January 1, May 1, June 24, December 25 and 26. Both are free from 3:00 to 8:00 pm on the 1st Sunday of each month. General Admission is 5€, groups and students under 25 pay 3€.

- **MUSEU DE CERÀMICA** - Palau Reial de Pedralbes, Avinguda, 686, has one of the most impressive collections of medieval ceramics in Europe, plus contemporary pieces by Miró and Picasso ([www.museuceramica.bcn.es](http://www.museuceramica.bcn.es)).
- **MUSEU D'ARTS DECORATIVES** – Opened in 1932, features Spanish blown glass, period furniture and pocket watches from the 16th century ([www.dhub-bcn.cat](http://www.dhub-bcn.cat)).

## DO-IT-YOURSELF GUIDED TOURS

### HOP-ON HOP-OFF BUS

#### BUS TURÍSTIC

The very easiest, least labor/walking intensive, time-consuming way of seeing all the city attractions in a short amount of time is to use the **Bus Turístic**. The visitor who tries to see all of BCN's attractions his own way in two days by foot/bus/metro wins the "dumb tourist of the year award". Just kidding, but I've tried it and learned the hard way.



BCN's attractions are incredibly spread out; much more so than Madrid's, and the blocks of the Eixample are quite wide, with some sights not easily accessible by metro. For example, to reach the National Museum of Romanesque Art, you could take the metro to the Plaça de Espanya stop and walk, but you'll be walking uphill, climbing for the next 15-20 minutes. Even though there are escalators to take you to the top, the last tier of escalators is difficult to find, and at times you may find it under repair or just non-functioning. So please take the Bus Turístic.

I recommend buying the two-day pass for a more leisurely sightseeing experience, doing the northern (red) circuit on the 1st day and the southern (blue) on the 2nd. The third (green) route from the Port Olympic to the new Forum-Barcelona Diagonal area is of very limited interest to tourists and runs from only April to September. The red and green routes run **daily, except** for December 25 and January 1.

However, if you're very pressed for time, the whole tour, north and south (red and green), can be done in a single day. Without alighting from the bus, each route, red and green, can be done in two hours. The blue route takes 40 minutes. There are a total of 44 possible stops along the way. The bus will take you through the Olympic Village area as well, plus a stop in front of the Parque de la Ciudadella, for an optional visit to the zoo.

Start your tour at the Plaça Catalunya on the red (northern) route, getting off the bus at the Francesc Macià - Diagonal stop to switch to the southern blue route. Easy!

A one-day adult pass costs 27€, and a two consecutive day pass is 38€. For children 4-12 the one-day pass costs 16€, two days for 20€. It's free to toddlers three years and younger. There is no senior discount. The bus comes by every 10-15 minutes. I have never had to wait long for a bus, even in summer. 10% online discount available ([www.barcelonabusturistic.cat](http://www.barcelonabusturistic.cat)).

You'll be given a little book of explanations of the sites and a booklet chock full of discounts for tours, museum entrances, cable car, Tower of Collserola (on Tibidabo) and the Mirador de Colón tower (at the harbor) and "Las Golondrinas" boat trip, not a bad way to spend 40 minutes on a

steamy summer's day, etc. There's a very limited commentary in several languages by hostesses on board. Take your guidebook along with you for maximum enjoyment.

*Note: Take the very first bus; leaving the Plaça Catalunya in front of the El Corte Inglés department store promptly at 9:00 am. You won't regret the early start! By mid-morning these busses get quite crowded, even during the winter months.*

### **BARCELONA CITY TOURS**

Operated by Juliá Travel, it is now an alternative to the Barcelona Bus Turístic Hop-On Hop-Off bus operated by Barcelona Turisme. The Barcelona City Tour service operates from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm during the winter months, and until 8:00 pm during the summer, running every 7 to 20 minutes, depending on the season. Prices for the one-day pass are 27€ for adults, 16€ for children 4-12, and 23€ for seniors over 65. Two-day passes are 38€ for adults, 20€ for children and 29€ for seniors ([juliatravel.com/tours/barcelona/](http://juliatravel.com/tours/barcelona/)).

### **BARCELONA CARD**

The tourist office also promotes the Barcelona Card available for 3 to 5 (consecutive) days for free public city transport, free "Golodrinas" boat tour, free entrance to the Poble Espanyol (an ersatz and now a bit cheesy Spanish village built in 1929) and 13 museums, 70 + discounts. The three-day card is 45€ for adults and 21€ for children (4-12), but I don't consider it a particularly good value. I find it just too expensive for my needs, and I never quite get my money's worth.

For more information see [www.barcelonacard.org](http://www.barcelonacard.org). You'll receive a discount if you purchase your tickets on-line.

### **ARTICKET BCN**

Another discount card, it gives you free entrance to six museums for 30€ and is valid for six months; however, you must have an interest in visiting all six for it to be worthwhile. The museums included are: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) which has an extraordinary collection Gothic and Romanesque art, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Fundació Antoni Tàpies, if you have interest in this abstract expressionist, Fundació Joan Miró (very worthwhile, stunning setting), Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (so, so) and the Museu Picasso, a do-no-miss. It can be purchased in the BCN tourist offices and branches of the Caixa Catalunya banks or as the rest, online. See [www.articketbcn.org](http://www.articketbcn.org).

## SELF-GUIDED TOURS

### A WALK THROUGH THE BARRI GÒTIC

For a through and informative tour of the Barri Gòtic, take the guided tour offered by the city tourist office or do a self-guided tour with the **Insight Guide Barcelona** or with a copy of George Semler's **Barcelona Walks** in hand.

### CATEDRAL DE BARCELONA

Barcelona's primarily Gothic Cathedral on Plaça de la Seu is open for worship on weekdays from 8:00 am to 12:45 pm and 5:45 to 7:30 pm. Open Saturdays from 8:00 to 12:45 pm and again from 5:15 to 8:00, and Sundays from 8:00 to 1:45 and in the afternoon from 5:15 to 8:00. Entry is free.

You can enter weekdays from 1:00 to 5:30 with a donation (7€), on Saturdays from 1:00 to 5:00 and from 2:00 to 5:00 on Sundays and Holidays. Visit the choir (3€) or take the elevator to the roof (3€) for a bird's eye view of the entire Gothic Quarter. The visit to the cloister, where 13 geese are kept, the number symbolizing the age at which the co-patron Saint Eulalia died, is free ([www.catedralbcn.org](http://www.catedralbcn.org)).

You can watch the locals form circles and dance the "sardana", the Catalán national dance, prohibited during the Franco regime, and a display of moving regional pride. Barcelonans come to the square to dance, accompanied by musicians, at noon on Sundays, 6:30 pm on Saturdays and 7:00 pm on Wednesdays. It's an experience you won't want to miss.

### GENERALITA

Walk from the cathedral square to the Plaça Saint Jaume, where the Generalitat, the Parliament of Catalunya, seat of the autonomous government, and the **Ajuntament**, the city hall, are located. You can visit the Baroque salons of the city hall on weekends and public holidays.

### A (VIGILANT) "PASEO" DOWN LA RAMBLA

Take a stroll down the teeming, always lively and often outrageous, pickpocket-filled La Rambla, from north to south, from the Plaça de Catalunya to the statue of Columbus at the port. You'll see human statues, vendors selling canaries, flower merchants, the largest newspaper and tacky souvenir kiosks in the world, lottery ticket booths, shoeshine boys, card games (don't participate), jugglers, etc. Watch your belongings *at all times* when strolling down the Ramblas, or in the warren of dark and narrow streets of the Old Quarter, Ciutat Vella.

### AREAS TO AVOID

Avoid the very seedy *lower* El Raval quarter behind the lower Ramblas, particularly at night. The upper Raval has become a trendy, funky, boho area, slowly gentrifying since the opening of the Casa Camper Hotel, but still watch your pockets. Escudellers street, just off of and east of the Ramblas, again, especially at night, as well as the nearby Placa George Orwell that attracts a druggy crowd. The Plaça Reial attracts vagrants and pickpockets.

## LA BOQUERÍA FOOD MARKET

On the right side of the Ramblas heading south, you'll find the glorious turn-of-the-century Boquería food market, officially called the **Mercat de Sant Josep** ([www.boqueria.info](http://www.boqueria.info)).

It opens at 6:00 am daily, and is a true feast for the senses. Some 330 purveyors have permanent stalls, and some stalls are legendary, such as **Petràs** for great wild mushrooms in 20 varieties, **Pons** for beautiful fruits and vegetables and **La Masía**, stand #970, that sells sausages from the village of Vic.



### PINOTXO BAR

As you enter the market, immediately to your right you'll see a little "hole in the wall" lunch counter with a sign above, *Pinotxo bar*, with a drawing of Pinocchio. You can't miss it given all the cartoons and press articles written about it, prominently displayed all around. This is a local legend, Juanito Bayan's famous luncheonette, known to "foodies" all over the world, as Juanito is known as the market's most colorful (and most written about) character ([pinotxobar.com](http://pinotxobar.com)).

This short order chef, now in his late seventies, who has been behind the counter for over 50 years, has been acclaimed in virtually all the world's gourmet and travel magazines, most recently in the New York Times "*36 Hours, 125 Weekends in Europe*". He's the talkative gentleman with the spiked gray hair, bow tie and vest. George Semler, author of Fodors Barcelona, calls him "the ambassador-to-the-world of Spanish gastronomy".

Grab a seat, there are only 15 bar stools at the counter (they have added 15 more stools at five high tables to the side to catch the overflow - not as much fun). Observe your seat mates and order what the locals are having. Juan or his nephews, Jordi and Albert, will take your order but may not write anything down. And you won't see a menu. Best time to show up is between

10:00 am and noon. For breakfast they serve the very best “xixos” (a type of sugar-covered doughnut) in town. The food couldn't be fresher, and it'll be 3 deep at the bar at lunchtime, all eagerly waiting these famous little treats. Open 6:00 am to 4:00 pm, closed Sundays and holidays.

Acclaimed chefs and famous personalities from around the world, including Barcelona's own Ferran Adrià (who calls Pinotxo a “culinary temple”), and fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier, frequent this little counter. Juanito Bayan's recipe for scrambled eggs with shrimp was published in the 100 best of Saveur magazine in a short piece *"The Best Food from the Smallest Kitchen in the Best Market in Europe"*. And his picture has graced the NY Times. In '04 a cookbook and history of Juan and his lunch counter, with prologue written by Adrià, *"Pinocho, la vida y la cocina en la Boquería de Barcelona"*, was published. We purchased it at the cookbook stand at the very back of the market.

### EL QUIM DE LA BOQUERIA

In the market since 1998, and who may just be Juan Bayen's heir apparent, also very much warrants a visit. And to the average tourist, it may impress even more, as the counter is tidier, well kept, doesn't look so “hole in the wall”, is prettily decorated with fresh flowers, giving it a more polished look. Coffee is served here in cups rather than glasses, the counter sports wooden high chairs with backs rather than metal stools, and it has a blackboard menu for ease of ordering. The paper placemats relate the history of this counter. You can find it in the middle of the market towards the back. Quim Muñoz, the chef, will be the one cooking, wearing the earring ([elquimdelaboqueria.com](http://elquimdelaboqueria.com)).



We had our coffee and xixos at Pinotxo, then moved to Quim for our almuerzo, a late-morning snack taken around noon. We had delicious tortillas served with pa amb tomaquet (tomato bread). The gentlemen next to us were devouring chipirones (squid). Other specialties are huevos fritos con chipirones (fried eggs with squid) for 14,50€ and setas con salteadas con foie (wild mushrooms sautéed with foie) that looked fabulous.

Open Tuesday-Thursday from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm and Friday and Saturday until 5:00. Closed Mondays, Sundays, holidays and from February 25-March 11.

### KIOSCO UNIVERSAL

Yet another rather fancy looking lunch counter in the middle of the market gets praise from local gastronomes. Open Monday-Saturday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.



### GRAN TEATRE DEL LICEU

A bit further below on the Ramblas, also on the right side going south, is the opera house built in 1847. It was destroyed by fire in 1861 and again in 1994 before being refurbished to perfection, doubled in size and reopened a few years ago. Take a guided tour of this lovely, neoclassical building with Baroque décor. The tours are offered Monday-Friday at 9:30 and 10:30 am, lasting 50 min, for 16€ for adults. The guided tour includes the theatre vestibule, auditorium, hall of mirrors and the Circle del Liceo. An express tour is offered daily at 9:30 and 10:30 am for 8€ for adults ([www.liceubarcelona.cat](http://www.liceubarcelona.cat)).

Or better yet, see a live performance. The box seats have wonderful antechambers. In olden days each family decorated its antechamber in an individual style. The stage takes up 70% of the hall. Up in the “nosebleed” section there were once seats for the “clac”, a group of university students who could watch the performances for just a few pesetas, but in exchange for their ticket they had the obligation to applaud furiously at the end. There’s also a beautiful gilded “Hall of Mirrors” where the elite met to socialize between acts. The theater now houses 2,300 spectators ([www.liceubarcelona.cat/en/tickets](http://www.liceubarcelona.cat/en/tickets)).

### PALAU DE LA MÚSICA CATALANA

Off the Via Laietana on Santa Francesc de Paula, 2, is a lavishly decorated Art Nouveau music palace built in 1908 to house the Orfeo Catalan choir, the work of a Gaudí contemporary, equally

famous Modernista architect, Domenech I Montaner of the Catalanian “Renaixença”. It’s been declared a World Heritage Site. The delightful guided tours, in several different languages, leave



every half hour and last about 50 minutes, including a 20-minute video. Only 55 people are allowed in at a time, and tours sell out fast. The tickets are sold up to a week in advance at the new box office behind the Petit Palau annex. A screen indicates when tours are given in each language, and how many tickets are left for each tour. On my last visit to the Palau, Monday, January 14th there was an English tour a 1:00 pm, again at 2:00 with the last one at 3:00. If you are a music lover or architecture buff, this will be one of the highlights of your visit to Barcelona.

The Palau is a bit smaller than the Liceu, holding only 2,000 spectators. The guide will explain to you how they magically hide the first 3 - 5 rows of seats. The most recent expansion with subterranean concert hall, the Petit Palau, has now been completed and the organ, which hadn't been played in 20 years, has been restored and inaugurated. The Palau is also the venue for concerts by international pop and jazz artists such as Carlos Nuñez, Maceo Parker, Gilberto Gil, just a few who have performed recently. Check the performance schedule at: [www.palaumusica.cat](http://www.palaumusica.cat)

### **EL BORN**

While in the Barri Gòtic, continue your explorations to the young, hip, trendy, happening (and tourist mobbed), constantly gentrifying, Soho or Notting Hill type **El Born** (alternatively spelled Borne) district. Or soak up the atmosphere of this lively neighborhood after your visit to the Picasso Museum.

### **SANTA MARÍA DEL MAR BASILICA**

Be sure to visit the pretty Santa María del Mar basilica, also know as the “cathedral de la Ribera” on the Placa Santa María. It's one of the best examples of elegant Catalan Gothic style, from the

14th century, with beautiful stained glass windows; the window of Ascension in the chapel of Santa Maria, the Lavabo in the chapel of Sant Rafael and the great rose window.

Open Monday-Saturday from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm and 4:30 to 8:00 pm and Sundays and public holidays from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm and 4:30 to 8:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 933 102 390

If you hit the basilica during closing hours, just go for tapas at any of the trendy bars with spill over terraces in this area, or have a great seafood lunch at the counter of lively Cal Pep, just down Carrer Vidriera to the tiny Plaça les Olles, but arrive at 1:00 when doors open. You'll also find many trendy, too-cool-for-school shops here in El Born, such as Custo Barcelona, Bubó and Xocoa chocolates and Origenes 99.9%. Or in the morning visit the Mercat de Santa Caterina (see below).

### **PARC DE LA CIUADDELLA**

The major attraction here is the zoo, the Parc Zoològic Acuarama ([www.zoobarcelona.cat](http://www.zoobarcelona.cat)). Sadly, the zoo's most famous inhabitant, the albino gorilla, "*Copito de Nieve*" has now passed on after a very long life as the zoo's star attraction. But there is a house of horrors, the Hotel Krueger.

The zoo is open January 1-March 23 from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm, March 24-May 15 until 7:00 pm, May 16-September 15 until 8:00 pm, September 16-October 26 until 7:00 pm and October 27-December 31 until 5:30 pm. Open 10:00 am to noon on Christmas day.

## OPTIONAL TOURS - CONTEMPORARY CATALÁN ARTISTS

### MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI

In the slowly gentrifying but still bohemian, multiethnic Raval section, just west of the Ramblas, you'll find the striking, Richard Meier designed, glass structure, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA). But unless you're familiar with contemporary Catalán artists such as Basquiat, Boltanski, Muntadas or the Basques Oteiza and Chillida, this may be skip-able. Open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 11:00 am to 7:30 pm, Saturday 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, Sundays and holidays, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Admission is €5,11.

### CAMPO NOU STADIUM *For the soccer fan*

Visit the temple of Barça, the largest soccer stadium in Europe. You can stop for a visit on the Bus Turistic route. Open Monday-Friday, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm and 4:30 to 7:30 pm. The full guided tour, including a visit to the museum, costs €11 for adults or €8,80 for children 12 and under. Buy your ticket at the ticket booths and enter through gates 7 or 8. Museum is open Monday-Saturday, 10:30 am to 6:30 pm, Sundays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm ([fcbarcelona.com](http://fcbarcelona.com)).

## TOURING WITH A PROFESSIONAL

### MY FAVORITE THINGS

Conducts themed walking tours (culinary, cooking, Art Nouveau, the secret life of the Old Town) and is run by two Belgian ladies. Walks take around four hours and have a maximum of 10 participants ([www.myft.net](http://www.myft.net)).

### FOREVER BARCELONA

Marta Laurent is one of the most popular professional guides in Barcelona, offering walking and chauffeured city tours and day trips around Catalonia, specializing in Gaudí sites, Museums,



Jewish heritage, history, art and architecture. Worked as a guide at La Sagrada Familia for several years before heading out on her own ([www.foreverbarcelona.com](http://www.foreverbarcelona.com)).

### **BARCELONA SANDRA TOURS**

Sandra is another popular guide offering private walking tours as well as chauffeured tours of the city, specializing in Gaudí, Picasso, and Jewish Cultural tours in Barcelona and Girona, in addition to Montserrat and the wine cellars of the Penedés ([www.barcelonasandratours.com](http://www.barcelonasandratours.com)).

### **DOMINIQUE BLINDER**

Recommended by George Semler of Fodor's Barcelona, also gives multilingual tours of the Jewish Quarter on her Jewish Heritage Tours. These tours can be given in English, Hebrew, French, Spanish or Catalán ([www.urbancultours.com](http://www.urbancultours.com)).

### **HI THIS IS BARCELONA**

Jordan Susselman, a Californian living in Barcelona since 2000, offers private, tailor made tours of the city which might include a tour of the Gothic Quarter, of the trendy El Born district, of Moderniste architecture, of the city's hidden corners, a bicycle tour or tapas tour. See them all at: [www.hithisisbarcelona.com](http://www.hithisisbarcelona.com)

### **SEGWAY TOURS**

Three hours with a guide at 10:30 am and 2:30 pm from March 1-October 30, cost 65€/person, also available once a day from November 1-February 28 starting around 11:00 am. Meeting point is Plaça Sant Jaume in Gothic Quarter. Not a bad way to see the harbor area, which is quite spread out ([www.barcelonasegwayglides.com](http://www.barcelonasegwayglides.com)).

### **CAT-HELICOPTERS BARCELONA**

Offers daily chopper tours over the city, the first such venture in Spain. The BCN Sky Tour costs a pricey 95€/person. Their Montserrat + BCN Sky Tour is 300€/person. The heliport is located in the port area, next to the cruise ship terminal, just under the raising bridge. Each helicopter can carry up to four passengers ([www.cathelicopters.com](http://www.cathelicopters.com)).

### **UN COTXE MENYS - BICICLETES**

**Bike Tours Barcelona** offers a 3 to 3-1/2-hour bike tour around the old city; the fishermen's quarter of Barceloneta, up to the Sagrada Família and around the Port Olímpic. These tours start daily at 11:00 am year round, except for December 25 and 26, with an additional tour at 4:30 pm Friday-Monday from April 1-September 15. The cost is 22€/person and 20€ for children up to age 16. Their meeting point is located outside the tourist office on Placa de Sant Jaume, the Town Hall Square ([www.biketoursbarcelona.com](http://www.biketoursbarcelona.com)).

### **TRIXI**

Or rent a Trixi, an electric rickshaw-like device that looks like a love-bug. You can find them at the Columbus monument at the bottom of the Ramblas or around the Cathedral. Have the driver take you around the Old City or zoom around the Port Vell or out to the beaches. The Gothic Tour for two is 18€ for 30 minutes and the Gaudi Tour for two is 50€ for two hours. See their

website for additional tours ([www.trixi.com/barcelona](http://www.trixi.com/barcelona)). They also offer bicycle tours and rentals ([www.bicicletabarcelona.com/](http://www.bicicletabarcelona.com/))

## **COOKING CLASSES**

### **COOK & TASTE**

Celebrating their 10th anniversary, the company offers visitors half-day cooking classes lasting 3-1/2 hours with an optional pre-class guided tour of the Boquería market Tuesday-Saturday morning and Friday evening. The twice-daily classes begin at 11:00 am and 5:00 pm and are given every day. The cost, including ingredients, meal with wine and taxes, is 65€, the optional market tour is an additional 13€. Children under 16 are half-price.

The School is conveniently located just off Las Ramblas at Paradis, 3, in the Gothic Quarter. These cooking classes are offered for individuals or for groups and special events can be arranged. Private classes are also available and they are now offering a Foodies Walking Tour with a minimum of two people, price to be agreed ([www.cookandtaste.net](http://www.cookandtaste.net)).

### **BARCELONA COOKING**

Located next to the La Boqueria market in the heart of the Gothic Quarter, they offer a classic tapas cooking class Saturday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 for 65€, a Spanish cooking class, plus tour of La Boqueria market, on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm for 78€. The Spanish cooking class is also available from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Monday-Friday for 65€. A Catalan tapas and wine class, plus the La Boqueria market tour, is offered on Wednesdays only from 10:00 am to 2:00 for 78€. Children under 16 are half-price for all cooking classes ([www.barcelonacooking.net](http://www.barcelonacooking.net)).

### **bcnKITCHEN**

In El Born next to the market, offers cooking classes, workshops and tastings. The Market visit and Spanish Cuisine Workshop begins at 10:30 in the morning with a visit to the market and is priced at 65€, with a limit of 12 places, available one Tuesdays and Thursday to Saturday only. Private events are also available ([cookingclassesbarcelona.com](http://cookingclassesbarcelona.com)).

## **ORGANIZED BUS TOURS**

### **AUTOCARES JULIA - GRAY LINE SPAIN**

Besides their Hop-On Hop-Off city tours, they offer packaged excursions to Girona, Figueres and the Dalí Museum, Tuesday-Sunday, departing at 8:30 am and returning at 9:30 pm for 76€. They also offer full-day tours to the Lloret - Tossa de Mar area of the Costa Brava (but not the prettiest section) on Wednesdays and Saturdays, May-October, departing at 8:30 am, returning at 4:30 pm at a cost of 53€. There's also a half-day (5-1/2 hour) visit to Montserrat departing daily at 9:15 am from their terminal on Ronda Universitat, 5, returning at 2:45 pm. Pick up a brochure at your hotel or reserve on-line ([www.juliatravel.com](http://www.juliatravel.com)).

### CATALUNYA BUS TURÍSTIC

Because of the popularity of the city Bus Turístic, a variety of day-trip excursions are now offered by an offshoot of this same company from March 24 to November 8. The Catalunya Bus Turístic runs a trip to Figueres and Girona, which includes entrance to the Dali Museum and city discounts, for 68,40€ (web discount). It departs from the Plaça de Catalunya daily, except Mondays, at 8:30 am, returning at 7:30 pm. Their Montserrat tour is priced at 41,40€ (web discount) and departs Barcelona at 10:30 am, returning at 3:30 pm (except Mondays). The Premium Montserrat & Gaudí tour (63€ with the web discount) is available Monday through Saturday, departing at 8:30 am, returning at 5:00 pm.

They also offer a Wine & Cava tour with tastings at three of the popular winers in the Penedés for 62,10€ (web discount). Tours available Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. The tour departs at 8:30 am from the Plaça de Catalunya, returning at 4:15 in the afternoon. You can reserve your tickets on line at ([www.catalunyabusturistic.com](http://www.catalunyabusturistic.com)).

### SOME OF MY FAVORITES DAY TRIPS

See [www.catalunyatourisme.com](http://www.catalunyatourisme.com) for detailed info on the myriad possibilities.

#### GIRONA

This is a captivating and hip city with a dark, interesting, medieval Jewish quarter, the Call, considered one of the best preserved in all of Spain, a lively Ramblas, an imposing Gothic cathedral with enormous 23-meter wide nave, a Jewish History Museum, medieval Arab Baths, and all around great atmosphere. The cathedral museum houses a stunning 12th century tapestry, *Tapis de la Creació*. I highly recommend a day trip to Girona!

Your first stop should be the excellent tourist office on the Rambla de la Libertat 1. The ladies will give you a map and prepare a nice touring route for you. They're very helpful ([www.ajuntament.gi/tourisme](http://www.ajuntament.gi/tourisme)).

You can reach Girona by train in 1 to 1-1/2 hours from Sants station, depending on the type of train. See the schedule at [www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es). If you'd like to spend the night, there's the modern 4-star Hotel Ciutat de Gerona ([www.faderson.com](http://www.faderson.com)), or in the medieval quarter, the 4-star Hotel Historic, which is actually a small group of architecturally charming apartments ([www.hotelhistoric.com](http://www.hotelhistoric.com)).

And if you do spend the night, please consider a splurge dinner at one of Catalunya's finest restaurants, the 2-star Michelin El Cellar de Can Roca ([www.cellercanroca.com](http://www.cellercanroca.com)), 2 km west of the city (take a taxi). With a 9/10 rating from *The Best of Spanish Gastronomy*, 9.5/10 in *Gourmetour* and *3 Campsa suns*. And named the "Best Restaurant in the World for 2015", the Roca brothers will present you a superb dining experience that you will long remember. It is closed on Sunday and Monday, July 1-15 and Christmas day.

## TARRAGONA

Founded by the Romans as *Tarraco*, the capital of its Western Mediterranean empire and birthplace of Pontius Pilate, has a famed collection of well-preserved Roman ruins, including amphitheater and necropolis and an archeological museum. One hour away by train ([www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es)). Most sites can be visited with a combined ticket, but are closed on Mondays.

## FIGUERES

Head to the Alt Empordà and the over-the-top Teatro-Museu Dalí if you're an avid Dalí/Surrealism fan ([www.salvador-dali.org](http://www.salvador-dali.org)). Figueres is Dalí's birthplace and the museum he created as a monument to himself and his burial site. Go and be amused. It's Dalí at his most outrageous, most flamboyant. Remember that his best and most important works cannot be found here. For those, you'll have to visit the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida or the Museo Centro Reina Sofía in Madrid, among others. But this is one of the most visited museums in all of Spain.

## DINING IN FIGUERES

The town of Figueres itself is a humdrum, rather dull market town but with one terrific restaurant, El Motel, in the 4-star Hotel Empordà ([ca.hotelemporda.com](http://ca.hotelemporda.com)), the cradle of new Catalan cuisine, impeccably run by the owner, Jaime Subirós, who comes out to greet each table. The restaurant was rated No. 5 of the 25 best restaurants in Spain by The Daily Meal in late January 2013 ([www.thedailymeal.com](http://www.thedailymeal.com)).

The hotel, totally renovated in '09, is on the old highway to France, in the north side of town on the right side, well past the Dalí museum, so take a taxi. It's considered one of Catalonia's best, serving classic Catalán dishes for fairly reasonable prices. It will be filled with French, a very good sign. His currant cream ice cream recipe was published in *Saveur* magazine.

The breadbasket is irresistible, and the cheese cart is legendary-half French, half Spanish! The full Market Menu, priced at €35,70 (with two desserts!) is a very good value, considering that the restaurant receives a consistent 8.5/10 rating from Gourmetour.

The Tasting Menu is €58,60, VAT included, but most diners share an appetizer (or forgo it), order a main course (portions are quite generous) and share either the dessert or cheese carts. Their delicious homemade sorbets are priced at €7,50. Diners are presented with a water menu of at least 35 choices (we chose a Viladrau). The wine list is enormous, with 200 labels from all Spanish D.O.s (including Mallorca) and even some from California, but it lists local wines that are quite affordable, such as the Floresta white or the Serrasague.

Because portions are so copious, dining a leisurely affair and the Empordà cuisine is so hearty, I would only choose to lunch here if you are staying nearby, or have finished your sightseeing for the day. Dress is casual. Open all year. The summer terrace is open from June-September.

Tel: (+34) 972 500 562

If you want to lunch downtown, there is the family owned Hotel Durán, whose restaurant serves classic Empordà dishes in a typical regional setting (but no outdoor terrace) and has been doing so since 1855. It's right off the Rambla on Lasauca, 5 ([www.hotelduran.com](http://www.hotelduran.com)). They offer a degustación menu for €47 and a daily lunch menu for €24, including VAT. Lunch is served 12:45 to 4:00 pm, dinner is from 8:30 to 11:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 972 501 250

Figueres by train is a trip of slightly under two hours. See the schedule at [www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es).

## MONTSERRAT

The “Serrated Mountain” is in the spiritual heart of Catalunya. Sitting atop a massif of limestone rising high above deep gorges, the monastery is perched on a dramatic cliff and houses the Black Virgin, venerated by pilgrims in the thousands. The boys' choir, the Escolania, one of the oldest in Europe, sings daily from Monday-Friday in the basilica of the Benedictine Monastery at 1:00 pm, and at noon and 6:45 pm on Sundays, from September through June. But be sure to check the current performance calendar at: [escolania.cat](http://escolania.cat).

This 50-km trip northwest of Barcelona can be accomplished by public transportation or by organized tour bus (see above). If you wish to go on your own you can take the train, the FGC, leaving from Metro Espanya every hour from 8:36 am to 5:36 pm. Buy a “Trans Montserrat” ticket, which includes the metro to Plaça Espanya, the train to Montserrat-Aeri, cable car up to the top, Sant Joan Funicular and Santa Cova Funicular. You can pick up this ticket for 18,63€ at any FGC station in the city, or better still, at the FGC shop in El Triangle, the huge shopping center to the west at Plaça Catalunya. You'll get off the FGC cogwheel train at Aeri de Montserrat where you'll catch the heart-stopping Aeri cable car up to the top of the mountain. The cable car leaves every 15 minutes. Download the pdf files on schedules and fares in English at: [www.cremallerademontserrat.com](http://www.cremallerademontserrat.com).

## SITGES

A colorful, sophisticated, hip, very gay, and an often wild, especially during Carnival, beach town south of Barcelona is noted for it's with wide, expansive beaches and major works of Modernist architects ([www.sitgestour.com](http://www.sitgestour.com)). It makes an easy day trip for fun in the sun. The narrow old quarter is filled with lively tapas bars, and the beaches are much better here than in the city. For gourmands, there is also the well-regarded Restaurante **Vinitast**, whose chef is Angel Palacios, formerly of La Broche in Miami and a prodigy of Ferran Adrià, was recently featured in Gourmet. This gourmet haven is located at Port d'Aiguadolc, Moll de la Ribera.

Sitges is easy to reach by the “Cercanías” (commuter) train from Passeig de Gracia, or Sants stations. Trains leave every 15 to 20 minutes starting at 5:25 in the morning and takes 30 to 40 minutes.

The last train to BCN departs at 10:25 in the evening, but you can check the current schedule at [renfe.es](http://renfe.es) for any changes. Click on A-Z Nuestros Productos, then Cercanías, then choose Barcelona. From the drop down menu choose Barcelona Plaça Catalunya as departure and Sitges as destination.

## WINE TOURING FROM BARCELONA DAY-TRIPS

### THE PENEDÉS WINE COUNTRY

#### FREIXENET

The cava bodegas, which produce Spain's "bubbly", at **Sant Sadurni d'Anoia**, are easily reached by train and make a nice half-day outing. Catch the RENFE train from Plaça de Catalunya, or Sants station. The trains depart hourly from 6:00-10:00 in the morning. The trip takes 45 minutes. As you exit the train station, the Freixenet distilleries will be right across the highway. Free 1-½ hr tours are currently given on Monday-Thursday at 11:00 am, noon, 1:00, 4:00 and 5:00 pm, and on Fridays at 10:00 am, noon and 1:00 pm. Open weekends at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm. Before you go be sure to check the calendar of visits and reserve a space online at: [www.freixenet.es](http://www.freixenet.es).

#### CODORNIÚ

This is the most impressive bodega, housed in a beautiful Modernista building designed by Puig I. Cadafalch, and declared a national monument. It has a cava museum, but you'd need to either drive, or take a taxi. Here again, you will be taken around portions of the 26 km long underground cellars by train-the largest underground cellars in the world. The winery is open for visits Monday – Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and on Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm only. Have your hotel call (+34) 938 913 342 to reserve space on a tour and verify opening hours. Or before you go, try their online reservations system, or email: [reservas@codorniu.es](mailto:reservas@codorniu.es)

#### RAVENTÓS I BLANC

This is another cava producer located on the Plaça del Roure. Open Monday - Thursday from 8:00 am to noon and 3:00 to 6:00 pm. Must call ahead for visits in English. Tel: (+34) 938 183 262. After our tours, we enjoy lunch in the center of the village at **Cal Blay** ([www.calblay.com](http://www.calblay.com)), on Josep Rivera, 7. It opens daily for lunch only from 1:00 to 3:30 pm. From Monday-Friday they serve an attractive menú del día for only 12€. The owners have opened a gourmet delicatessen down the street at number 27. An outdoor market comes to town every Thursday and Saturday.



### **THE PRIORAT & MONTSANT WINE REGION**

Although not as well known in Spain as the Rioja, Ribera del Duero or the Penedés wine regions, the Priorat, located in the Tarragona province, has been well received since it was first introduced to the United States less than 20 years ago. It offers some of the most favorable and expensive wines available on the market, including those from Cellers Capafons-Ossó, Vall Llach, Cims de Porrera, Clos Dominic, Masía Duch (El Tancat), Clos Berenguer and Mas Sinén along with traditional, family owned wineries such as Celler del Pont (Lo Givot). The productions are small, but the robust reds and succulent whites are well worth their lofty price.

### **FALSET**

The village sits in the center of the Priorat and Montsant wine growing region, and can be reached by the train from Barcelona, taking a taxi from Tarragona. We highly recommend hiring a guide or taking a tour when visiting the region due to the difficulty of reaching some of the wineries. Although not recommended as a day-trip from Barcelona, it is possible to do a day-trip with a private transfer if not driving. You can sign up for a tour the Priorat Tourist Board in Falset, or book a tour through Visit Priorat ([www.visitpriorat.com](http://www.visitpriorat.com)).

### **OVERNIGHTING IN FALSET**

If you find you want to spend a night or two in the Priorat, then we recommend checking out Hotel Sport ([www.hotelpriorat-hostalsport.com](http://www.hotelpriorat-hostalsport.com)), or Cal Compte ([www.calcompte.com](http://www.calcompte.com)), both located in the city of the village.

## BARCELONA NIGHTLIFE

### COCKTAIL BARS

*Party By the sea in Barceloneta*

#### **BESTIAL**

A product of the fashionable El Tragaluz group is a restaurant and discreet and elegant cocktail bar near the sea promenade on Ramón Trías Fargas, 2. It's decorated with gold and red velvet sofas, earth tone rugs, *disseny* bar chairs, has warm lighting and the feel of a Soho loft. For "beautiful people" in their 30s ([www.grupotragaluz.com](http://www.grupotragaluz.com)).

Tel: (+34) 932 240 407

#### **CARPE DIEM LOUNGE**

Below Hotel Arts, directly on the beach at Plaça Maritin, 32, with lounge beds on the terrace and a restaurant serving sushi, fish and sandwiches. Open daily from 1:00 pm to 4:00 am ([www.cdlebarcelona.com](http://www.cdlebarcelona.com)).

Tel: (+34) 932 240 470

*In L'Eixample*

#### **GAUDÍ'S LA PEDRERA**

The rooftop of Gaudí's La Pedrera (Casa Milá) becomes a giant "terrazza" (open air bar) on Fridays and Saturdays from June 19 to September 12. Go for drinks and live music, jazz, blues and flamenco. Open from 9:00 pm to midnight. Your ticket includes the visit, music and a glass of cava ([www.lapedrera.com](http://www.lapedrera.com)).

Tel: (+34) 934 880 176

#### **NICK HAVANA**

Celebrating it's 11th anniversary, is located in the Eixample at Roselló, 208. You'll find a slick design with wall-to-wall video screens, open midnight until 6:00 am, Thursdays until 5:30 am. Friday is Comedy Nights at 10:00 pm ([nickhavannabcn.com](http://nickhavannabcn.com)).

Tel: (+34) 619 157 140 (whatsapp)

#### **LUZ DE GAS**

In the Eixample at Muntaner, 246, opens Wednesday-Saturday at midnight. Luz de Gas Bar is open Monday to Saturday from 7:00 pm ([www.luzdegas.com](http://www.luzdegas.com)).

Tel: (+34) 932 097 711

#### **BELVEDERE**

Pasatje Mercader, 3, off Provença in the Left Eixample has a tiny back garden for cava sipping. Open Monday-Saturday from 1:30 pm to 2:30 am ([renaissance-hotels.marriott.com](http://renaissance-hotels.marriott.com)).

Tel: (+34) 932 159 088

**(DRY MARTINI) SPEAKEASY**

Aribau, 162-166, originally opened 30 years ago, is on the list of the 50 best cocktail bars in the world and considered the 3rd best gin bar in the world. Speakeasy was opened in 2002 by Javier de las Muelas, it is located at the Dry Martini warehouse. Open Monday-Friday from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm and Monday-Saturday from 8:00 pm to midnight. Closed Saturday at noon and Sundays and holidays ([www.speakeasy-bcn.com](http://www.speakeasy-bcn.com)).

Tel: (+34) 932 175 080

*In the Zona Alta***MIRABÉ**

Carrer Manuel Arnús, 2, high, high above the city on the balcon de Barcelona, is for the young and hip. Has attracted the likes of Cristina Aguilera, Joaquín Cortés, the Nuevo flamenco international dance star, Stefano Gabbana, of Dole & Gabbana designer fame, and Alicia Keys. Open daily from 12:30 pm to 3:00 am ([www.mirabe.com/es](http://www.mirabe.com/es)).

Tel: (+34) 934 185 880

*Off the Ramblas***BOADAS**

On Tallers, at the corner of Ramblas, is a famous Art Deco cocktail bar with lots of atmosphere. Go for their mojitos, an institution just like Havana's "La Floridita". The owner, María Dolores Boadas, served her first cocktails at age of 14. Open Monday-Saturday noon to 2:00 am ([boadascocktails.com](http://boadascocktails.com)).

Tel: (+34) 933 189 592

*In Gracia***GIMLET SANTALÓ**

Santaló, 24, is like Boadas, but in El Born, so it draws a hipper, trendier crowd, Soho types including actors, musicians and politicians. Bar owners often drop by on their nights off. Open Monday-Wednesday from 6:00 pm to 1:00 am, Thursday from 6:00 pm to 2:30 am and Friday and Saturday from 6:00 pm to 3:00 am. Closed Sunday.

Tel: (+34) 932 015 306

*Passeig del Borne - Near the old market there are several spots***BAR ROSAL CAFÉ**

**BERIMBAU** (music and Brazilian cocktails),

**MIRAMELINDO** (Italian),

**COCKTEL** - A tiny bar with music where the bartender Andy, makes adventurous cocktails.

## DANCE CLUBS

*In the Eixample*

### OMMSESSION

This is the downstairs disco of the trendy and ultra fashionable Hotel Omm off the Passeig de Gracia on Roselló, 265. It fills with models and other fashionistas ([www.hotelomm.es](http://www.hotelomm.es)). Open Wednesday-Saturday from 11:30 pm to 3:30 am.

### CDLC BARCELONA

An exquisitely decorated venue on Barcelona's beachside mixes Mediterranean with oriental influences, where the fashionable crowd mingles with celebrity soccer players who come to hang out with Barça star Patrick Kluivert, who is also one of the owners. Resident DJ Annemiek spins from 10:00 pm daily and at special parties such as Twilight and Privee alternate weekly on Sundays with top DJs ([www.cdlcbarcelona.com](http://www.cdlcbarcelona.com)).

### CITY HALL

On Rambla de Catalunya, 2-4, near the Plaça de Catalunya. Belongs to the Otto Zutz empire, and has three floors and terrace in which to dance to house music. Very fashionable ([cityhallbarcelona.com](http://cityhallbarcelona.com)). Open 1:00 am to 6:00 am, closed Mondays in winter.

**NICK HAVANA** (*see above*)

### AGUA DE LUNA

Carrer de Viladomat, 211, far west in the Left Eixample, is THE place to go for dancing to the Latin beat-salsa, merengue, chachacha and bachata ([www.aguadeluna.com](http://www.aguadeluna.com)). It's open Tuesday-Thursday 10:00 pm to 4:00 am, Friday and Saturday from 11:00 pm to 5:00 am, and on Sunday from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am.

*In the ultra exclusive Zona Alta*

### ELEPHANT

Passeig dels Til·lers,1, is in the ritzy Pedralbes (take a taxi). This area is the Beverly Hills of Barcelona. A big tent-like dance space filled with fashionista types ([www.elephantbcn.com](http://www.elephantbcn.com)). Open 11:30 pm to 4:00 am Thursday, 11:30 pm to 5:00 am, Friday and Saturday.

### OTTO ZUTZ

Lincoln, 15, has been around since 1985. Opened in a post-industrialist warehouse space in the Zona Alta and is more popular with the younger set ([ottozutz.com](http://ottozutz.com)). Open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday from midnight to 6:00 am.

*Off the Ramblas***SALSITAS / CLUB 22**

At Nou de la Rambla, 22, is a stylish, tunnel-like white space with a restaurant in the back. You'll be greeted by a doorman and pass through velvet curtains. After midnight from Wednesday to Saturday it turns into Club 22 with tropical décor, pineapples and palm trees. Quite fashionable.

*In El Born***BAR BORNEO**

Rec, 49, is a nightclub in El Born opposite the bar Gimlet (see above) featuring jazz. A laid-back place that occasionally has live concerts and 17 types of Gin ([www.barborneo.com](http://www.barborneo.com)).

*In the Gothic Quarter***CAFÉ ROYALE**

Nou de Zurbano, 3, is a soul, funk and bossa nova chill-out place with comfy sofas. Open until 3:00 on weekends. This is a hip, sleek bar and club on a tiny street just off Placa Real. Arrive by midnight to snag one of only 15 places on the velvet sofas, or wait up to an hour outside if you happen to arrive too late. Gets really busy at 2:00, a mixed crowd of 20 to 30 year-olds ([www.facebook.com/caferoyalebcn](https://www.facebook.com/caferoyalebcn)).

**FLAMENCO**

*Barcelona is **NOT** at all the best place to see authentic flamenco, as it's not remotely an art form in Catalunya, but if you won't be traveling to Madrid or Seville, there is a brand new venue created by the Cacheiro restaurant group that is destined to change the city's poor flamenco scene.*

**PALACIO DEL FLAMENCO**

Located in a renovated theater on tony Balmes, 139, in the Eixample, handy to hotels and recommended by the top desk staffs. It has a regular cast of 15 artists who perform true flamenco and flamenco fusion on the original theater stage while the orchestra seats have been turned into an upscale restaurant. Dinner is at 6:40, 8:30 and 9:40 pm, show times are 7:15, 8:30 and 10:40 pm ([www.palaciodelflamenco.com](http://www.palaciodelflamenco.com)).

Tel: (+34) 932 187 237

**PALAU DALMASE**

Montcada, 20, is found in a 15th century mansion. Flamenco performances daily at 6:00 pm, 7:30 and 9:30 ([www.palaudalmases.com](http://www.palaudalmases.com)).

Tel: (+34) 933 100 673

Try to avoid the touristy and unauthentic **Los Tarantos** on Placa Reial.