

## Beautiful BARCELONA - Easy Travel Guide

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Life never sleeps in the capital city of France- Paris. The City of Lovers or the City of Lights, the city of Paris is exceptional for it has not just one but a multitude of attractions that leave each and every visitor bizarre.

Beautiful city of Barcelona, capital of Catalonia (a Spain's province), is situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea and bordered at either end by 2 river deltas. Barcelona is the second largest city in Spain after its capital city Madrid. Barcelona has a population of 1.5 million, over 4 million including suburbs. The varied, eventful history of the city dates back 4,000 years to the first settlements by ancient farmers. Later it became a Roman colony, the Visigoth's capital city, and then it came under Moorish rule. It went through sieges, destructions and occupations, finally to become an autonomous democracy 1975. The city has always played an important role in political and cultural life of Spain and it is well reflected in the variety and quality of historical buildings, museums, many other tourist attractions. Today Barcelona is one of the most diverse European cities with unique culture and rich traditions. You can find here a formidable balance of the traditional things and the avant-garde. A cosmopolitan metropolis, Barcelona affords visitors a warm and sincere welcome, being acknowledged worldwide as one of the best tourist-friendly cities in Europe. Barcelona's organization of the 1992 Olympics provided regeneration of this dynamic city, gave a fresh start to its infrastructure development. **WHAT TO SEE AND WHERE: POINTS OF INTEREST**

- La Rambla is a tree-lined pedestrian boulevard packed with buckers, living statues, mimes and itinerant salespeople selling everything from lottery tickets to jeweler. Pavement cafes and stands selling craftwork, street performers surrounded by curious onlookers, a noisy bird market, Palau de la Virreina, a grand 18th-century rococo mansion, the Gran Teater del Liceu, the famous 19th-century opera house- these are all colorful parts of La Rambla's mosaic. La Rambla ends at the lofty Monument a Colom (Monument to Columbus) and the harbour.
- Barri Gotic - also known as Gothic Quarter, it is the old part of the city. Picasso lived and worked in Barri Gotic from 1895 to 1904 and Joan Miro was born and lived here during his youth. Gothic Quarter is situated on the right hand side of the La Rambla, it contains a concentration of medieval tall Gothic buildings (14-15th century) on narrow cobbled streets and now is home to much of the city's nightlife.
- La Sagrada Familia - La Sagrada Familia is one of the most famous and magnificent among Barcelona's landmarks. The life's work of Barcelona's famous architect, Antoni Gaudi, the magnificent spires of the unfinished cathedral imprint themselves boldly against the sky with swelling outlines inspired by the holy mountain Montserrat. Above each facade there are four towers, 12 in total, which are dedicated to the Apostles. The tower in the center, the tallest of all at 170 m., is dedicated to Jesus Christ. Around these there are the towers of the four Evangelists, and the tower over the apse is dedicated to the Virgin. They are encrusted with a tangle of sculptures that seem to breathe life into the stone. Gaudi died in 1926 before his masterwork was completed, and since then, controversy has continually dogged the building program. Nevertheless, the southwestern (Passion) facade, is almost done, and the nave, begun in 1978, is progressing.
- La Pedrera - Casa Mila (Mila House) is an apartment building, the last example of Gaudi's civil architecture. It is one of his finest and most ambitious creations, extraordinarily innovative in its functional, constructive, and ornamental aspects. Visitors can tour the building and go up to the roof, where they can see spectacular views of Barcelona. One floor below the roof is a modest museum dedicated to Gaudi's work.
- Montjuic - the largest open space in the city, its main attractions are the Olympic installations, the Spanish Village and the hilltop fortress. Montjuic, the hill overlooking the city centre from the southwest, is home to some fine art galleries, leisure attractions, soothing parks and the main group of 1992 Olympic sites. Montjuic is covered in ornamental gardens with water features and is the most popular destination in Barcelona on Sundays.
- Tibidabo - is the highest hill in the wooded range that forms the backdrop to Barcelona. It has amazing views of the whole of Barcelona, a stunning cathedral, and a family fun park Parc d'Atraccions with old-style rides offering breathtaking views. A glass lift at the park goes 115m (383 ft) up to a visitors' observation area at Torre de Collserola telecommunications tower.
- Modernisme - spectacular modernista architectural creations dotted around the city by famous Antoni Gaudi and his contemporaries.
- Camp Nou - home of F.C. Barcelona, one of Europe's leading soccer teams, with capacity of almost 100,000 spectators.
- The Seu Cathedral - Built in medieval times on the site of a Roman temple, La Seu is one of the great Gothic buildings in Spain.
- Parc de la Ciutadella - Barcelona's favorite park and a Sunday afternoon rendezvous for families, friends and ducks
- The Sardana - traditional Catalan dance, performed outside the cathedral and at national festivals, with everyone encouraged to join in.

**MUSEUMS** - The Barbier-Mueller Museum of Pre-Columbian Art -the only museum in Europe devoted exclusively to Pre-Columbian cultures. Housed in a gothic palace, its collection is one of the finest of its kind and gives visitors an insight into the rich world of the earliest cultures on the American continent. This tiny museum contains one

hundred pieces, including wood and stone sculptures, ceramics, tapestries, jade, often found in international exhibitions and prestige publications. The exhibits represented the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, Chavin, Mochica and Inca civilisations. Palau de la Musica Catalana - one of the world's most extraordinary music halls, it is a Barcelona landmark. From its polychrome ceramic ticket windows on the Carrer de Sant Pere Mes Alt side to its overhead busts of Palestrina, Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner, the Palau is the flagship of Barcelona's Moderniste architecture. Museu Picasso - is Barcelona's most visited museum. 3,500 exhibits make up the permanent collection. Picasso spent several years (1901-06) in Barcelona, and this collection, is particularly strong on his early work. Displays include childhood sketches, pictures from the beautiful Rose and Blue periods, and the famous 1950s Cubist variations on Velazquez's Las Meninas (Ladies-in-Waiting). Gaudi Casa-Museu - Gaudi lived in this pink, Alice-in-Wonderland house from 1906 to 1926, which now houses a museum of Gaudi-designed furniture, decorations, drawings, and portraits and busts of the architect. Fundacio Miro - it was a gift from the famous artist Joan Miro to his native city. The museum opened in 1975, and now it is one of Barcelona's most exciting showcases of contemporary art.

**BEACHES** - One of Barcelona's greatest draws is undeniably its beautiful beaches. Beside world-famous Costa Brava and Costa Dorada which are within 1-hr drive time from Barcelona, there are also several nice beaches over 4 km long within the city boundaries, we will list just several of them here: Nova Icaria- Closest to the Olympic marina, always crowded, this wide swathe of rough golden sand is great for food goers. There are three perfect beach bars and two very popular restaurants on the promenade (Mango and Chiringuito de Moncho) and countless bars and restaurants are just a short stroll away. Bogatell- This beach is twice the length of adjoining Nova Icaria and fringed by a stretch of stone walkway perfect for jogging, roller blading and cycling. Three large informal restaurants on the promenade. Mar Bella (Metro Ciutadella Vila Olimpica, plus 20-minute walk)- Barcelona's only naturist beach close to a peaceful park - good for a picnic or siesta under the trees. Barceloneta- wide and long, a traditional and popular stretch with locals, crowded, noisy and very jolly.

**WHEN TO GO, WEATHER:** The best times to visit Barcelona are late spring and early autumn, when the weather is still comfortably warm, around 21-25°C. Summers are usually hot and humid, with temperatures averaging +30 (+86 Fahrenheit). Especially avoid the "dead" month of August, when many shops, bars and restaurants close for the month as many local inhabitants head out of the city. Winters are cool with average daytime temperatures around +12 C (+59 Fahrenheit), occasionally rainy.

**GETTING THERE AND AROUND:** By a direct flight to Barcelona, or through Madrid or via another large European city from almost any major airports in the world. The highest fares are from May to September, the lowest in March-April, October-November and December to February (excluding Christmas and New Year when prices are hiked up). Note also that flying on weekends may increase your ticket cost. If traveling to Barcelona from within Europe you can also choose train, bus or car, though these take much longer than a plane and often work out no cheaper. Many Mediterranean cruises include Barcelona as a port of call.

**ACCOMODATIONS:** We can offer you a range of choices. You can choose vacation rentals in Barcelona starting from \$ 125 USD for a double room in a 4-star apartment hotel. Or you can opt for hotels from \$ 65 USD for a double room in a 3-star hotel. Accomodation prices do not change much throughout the year due to the steady all-season flow of visitors to this extremely popular tourist city and surrounding resorts.

**DINING:** Besides restaurants you can eat at bars where you would have a succession of tapas (small snacks- three or four chunks of fish, meat or vegetables, or salad, which traditionally used to be served up free with a drink) or raciones (larger ones). The bar option can be a lot more interesting, allowing you to do the rounds and sample local specialities. Generally, the average cost for a meal consisting of two dishes and dessert would come to about 25 Euros. Travellers on an extremely limited budget can do well for themselves by using the excellent markets, bakeries and delis and filling up on sandwiches and snacks. Decent restaurants and cafes are easily found all over the city, though you'll probably do most of your eating where you do most of your sightseeing, in the old town, particularly around La Rambla and in the Barri Gotic. Look for the best and most authentic seafood restaurants in Barceloneta, a seaside neighbourhood. Gothic Quarter neighbourhood is home to some of the oldest and most traditional restaurants in the city. Gracia is a very popular area among young people during the weekend, it leads the way in terms of exotic restaurants (Lebanese, Egyptian, Thai etc.).

**TRANSPORT:** Barcelona has excellent transport system comprising the metro (subway), buses, trains and a network of funiculars and cable cars. You can find a link to transport maps at the end of our guide. On all the city's public transport you can buy a single ticket every time you ride, but even over only a couple of days it's cheaper to buy a

targeta - a discount ticket strip. The T-10 targeta is valid for ten separate journeys on the metro, buses and trains. These tickets can be used by more than one person at a time. The metro is the quickest way of getting around Barcelona. For black-and-yellow taxis there is a minimum charge of \$ 2 euro. You'll obviously have a great deal more freedom if you rent a car . Major roads throughout the city are generally good, and traffic is generally well behaved, though Spain does have one of the highest incidences of traffic accidents in Europe. It also has some of the lowest fuel prices on the continent.

SHOPPING: Barcelona, one of the most stylish cities in Europe offers great shopping, from designer clothes and accessories to household items. You will find the city to be quite cheap for a lot of items, especially if you coincide with the annual sales ( rebaixas in Spanish) lasting from mid-January until the end of February, and throughout July and August. The best shopping areas in Barcelona are the old streets off the upper part of the Ramblas. Souvenirs include ceramics, which are widely sold in the streets around the cathedral; leather goods; city's delicatessens, particularly cooked Catalan meats and sausages; a porron (the long-spouted glass drinking jar); CDs and tapes of Catalan rock and pop, sardana music, Spanish rock or flamenco. If you're looking for original gift ideas, some of the best hunting can be found in the shops of any of the city's museums, where you'll find reasonably priced and unique examples of Catalan disseny (graphic), and other original items ranging from postcards to replica works of art. We wish you a nice and safe trip!

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