

Welcome to Barcelona

Barcelona is an enchanting seaside city with boundless culture, fabled architecture, and a world-class drinking and dining scene.

Architecture of the Ages

Barcelona's architectural treasures span 2000-plus years. Towering temple columns, ancient city walls and subterranean stone corridors provide a window into Roman-era Barcino. Fast forward 1000 years to the Middle Ages by taking a stroll through the shadowy lanes of the Gothic quarter. In other parts of town bloom the sculptural masterpieces of Modernisme, a mix of ingenious and whimsical creations. Barcelona has also long inspired artists, including Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró, whose works are on bold display in the city's many museums.

A Moveable Feast

Barcelona's great artistic traditions don't end at the canvas. The masters of molecular gastronomy – Albert Adrià, Carles Abellán et al – are part of the long and celebrated tradition of Catalan cooking. Simple, flavourful ingredients are transformed into remarkable delicacies and then served up in captivating settings. You can feast on hearty, rich paella at an outdoor table overlooking the sea or step back to the 1920s at an elegant art nouveau-filled dining room. Barcelona's wide-ranging palate adds further complexity: Basque-style tapas bars, Galician seafood taverns, avant-garde Japanese restaurants and sinful chocolate shops are all essential parts of the culinary landscape.

Under the Iberian Sun

The deep blue Mediterranean beckons. Sun-drenched beaches make a fine backdrop to a jog, bike ride or long leisurely stroll along the seaside – followed by a refreshing dip, of course. You can also enjoy the view from out on the water while kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding or taking it easy on a sunset cruise. Looming behind the city, the rolling forest-covered Collserola Hills provide a scenic setting for hiking, mountain biking or just admiring the view. Closer to the city centre, hilltop Montjuïc offers endless exploring amid botanic and sculpture gardens, an old castle and first-rate museums with panoramic views at every turn.

Twenty-Four Hour Party People

The night holds limitless possibilities in Barcelona. Start with sunset drinks from a panoramic terrace or dig your heels in the sand at a rustic *chiringuito*. As darkness falls, live music transforms the city: the rapid-fire rhythms of flamenco, brassy jazz spilling out of basements, and hands-in-the-air indie-rock at vintage concert halls. Towards midnight the bars fill. Take your pick from old-school taverns adorned with 19th-century murals, plush lounges in lamp-lit medieval chambers or boisterous *cava* (wine) bars. If you're still standing at 3am, hit the clubs and explore Barcelona's unabashed wild side.



Why I Love Barcelona

By Regis St Louis, Author

I love the sea, and taking an early morning jog along the Mediterranean is my favourite way to start the day. I'm also a bit of a history nerd, and relish strolling the cobblestone lanes of the Gothic quarter, thinking about all the people in past centuries who walked these same streets. And then there's the food and drink – the first-rate tapas bars, the abundant and inexpensive wine, the superb and reasonably priced multicourse lunches. Add to all this Catalan creativity (Modernisme, Miró, Dalí), bohemian bars and stunning nearby getaways and you have, quite simply, one of the world's most captivating cities.

For more about our authors, see p304.