



Barcelona

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Best Places to Eat

- Tickets (p285)
- Cinc Sentits (p284)
- Tapas 24 (p284)
- La Vinateria del Call (p280)
- Quimet i Quimet (p287)

Best Places to Stay

- DO (p275)
- Hotel Banys Orientals (p276)
- Five Rooms (p278)
- Cami Bed & Gallery (p278)
- Casa Gràcia (p279)

Why Go?

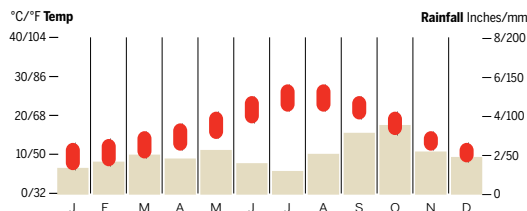
Barcelona is a mix of sunny Mediterranean charm and European urban style, where dedicated hedonists and culture vultures feel equally at home. From Gothic to Gaudí, the city bursts with art and architecture; Catalan cooking is among the country's best; summer sun seekers fill the beaches in and beyond the city; and the bars and clubs heave year-round.

From its origins as a middle-ranking Roman town, of which vestiges can be seen today, Barcelona became a medieval trade juggernaut. Its old centre holds one of the greatest concentrations of Gothic architecture in Europe. Beyond this are some of the world's more bizarre buildings: surreal spectacles capped by Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família.

Barcelona has been breaking ground in art, architecture and style since the late 19th century. From Picasso and Miró to today's modern wonders, Barcelona's racing pulse has barely skipped a beat. Equally busy are the city's avant-garde chefs, who compete with old-time classics for gourmets' attention.

When to Go

Barcelona



May Plaça del Fòrum rocks during Primavera Sound, a long weekend of outdoor concerts.

Jun Sónar, Europe's biggest celebration of electronic music, is held across the city.

Sep Festes de la Mercè is Barcelona's end-of-summer finale and biggest party.

Culinary Riches

Great Catalan restaurants can be found in nearly every neighbourhood around town. The settings can be a huge part of the appeal – with candlelit medieval chambers in the Ciutat Vella (old city) and Modernista design in the Eixample setting the stage for a memorable feast. Although there are plenty of high-end places in this city, *barcelonins* aren't averse to eating at humbler, less elegant places – which sometimes offer the most memorable dining experiences. Along those lines, you can't always judge the quality of the food from the restaurant interior. The size of the crowds gathering inside (or even outside) is usually a better indicator.

CATALAN CULTURE

Barcelona is famous for being the capital of Catalonia, which is home to unique traditions seen nowhere else in Spain. Catalan pride manifests itself in many aspects, including raucous festivals where you can see awe-inspiring *castells* (human towers) and frightening *correfocs* (fire runs). The biggest events are Festes de Santa Eulàlia (p272) in February and Festes de la Mercè (p274) in September. But no matter what time of year you visit, you can catch Catalan folk dancing: see the *sardana* performed in front of La Catedral from 6pm on Saturdays or around noon on Sundays. The Catalan language is widely spoken, and you'll earn much goodwill by learning a few phrases. *Bon dia* (good day/good morning), *bona tarda* (good afternoon) or *bona nit* (good evening) are good places to start.

Top Modernista Gems

- ➔ La Sagrada Família (p249), Antoni Gaudí's unfinished symphony, is a soaring cathedral that people love or loathe. Work continues apace on this controversial project.
- ➔ Palau de la Música Catalana (p244), a gaudily sumptuous home for music to suit the most eclectic of tastes, is a giddy example of Modernista fantasy.
- ➔ La Pedrera (p257), Gaudí's wavy corner apartment block with an exquisite period apartment and a sci-fi roof, is one of the best examples of the star architect's work.
- ➔ Casa Batlló (p253), possibly kookier than La Pedrera, looks at first glance like some strange sea creature frozen into a building facade. Inside, it's all curls and swirls.
- ➔ Recinte Modernista de Sant Pau (p257), long one of the city's main hospitals, features 16 uniquely decorated pavilions.

SEASIDE ALLURE

No matter the season, taking a stroll or a bike ride along Barcelona's revitalised waterfront makes a splendid complement to exploring medieval lanes and Modernista architecture. In summer, open-air beach bars provide refreshing pit stops.

Top Tips

- ➔ Beat the crowds by buying tickets online for the Museu Picasso and La Sagrada Família.
- ➔ Have a seafood feast in Barceloneta.
- ➔ Take a biking tour, walking tour (many are free) or a gourmand's stroll.
- ➔ Explore the latest new bars in up-and-coming Sant Antoni and Poble Sec.

Best Drinking Spots

- ➔ Ocaña (p287)
- ➔ Sor Rita (p287)
- ➔ La Caseta del Migdia (p291)
- ➔ Dry Martini (p290)
- ➔ Bar Marsella (p289)

Resources

- ➔ Barcelona Turisme (www.barcelonaturisme.com) Official tourism website.
- ➔ Miniguide (www.miniguide.es) Art, film, shops, eateries, bars and clubs.
- ➔ Barcelona Rocks.com (www.barcelonarocks.com) Bars, clubs and gigs.