



# Barcelona

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Tickets (p291)
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- » Alkímia (p290)
- » Koy Shunka (p287)
- » Cal Pep (p288)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel Neri (p283)
- » Hotel Banys Orientals (p285)
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- » Casa Camper (p284)
- » Hotel Constanza (p286)

## Why Go?

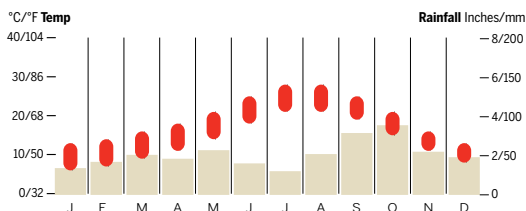
Barcelona is a mix of sunny Mediterranean charm and European urban style, where dedicated hedonists and culture vultures feel equally at home. From Gothic to Gaudí, the city bursts with art and architecture; Catalan food is among the country's best; summer sun seekers fill the beaches in and beyond the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

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

**DON'T MISS**

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

**Fast Facts**

- » Population: 1.62 million
- » Greater metropolitan area: 636 sq km
- » Average annual income (2009): €23,900
- » Number of visitors (2010): 7.3 million

**Best of What's Free**

- » Park Güell (p268)
- » Església de Santa Maria del Mar (p252)
- » Estadi Olímpic (p280)
- » Castell de Montjuïc (p273)

**Resources**

- » Barcelona Turisme ([www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com)) Official tourism website.
- » Barcelona ([www.bcn.cat](http://www.bcn.cat)) Barcelona Town Hall, with links.
- » Le Cool (<http://lecool.com>) What's-on guide.
- » Barcelona Yellow ([www.barcelonayellow.com](http://www.barcelonayellow.com)) Links on everything from Gaudí to gourmet dining.

**A Hidden Portrait at La Sagrada Família**

Careful observation of the Passion Facade of Antoni Gaudí's masterpiece, La Sagrada Família (p257), will reveal a special tribute to the genius architect from sculptor Josep Subirachs. In a building dripping with symbology, some of it less than obvious to the uninitiated, this search is not too difficult a task. The central sculptural group (below Christ crucified) shows, from right to left, Christ bearing his cross, Veronica displaying the cloth with Christ's bloody image, a pair of soldiers and, watching it all, a man called the Evangelist. Subirachs used a rare photo of Gaudí, taken a couple of years before his death, as the model for the Evangelist's face.

**MANIC MONDAYS**

Many attractions shut their doors on Monday, but there are plenty of exceptions. Among the more enticing open attractions are Casa-Museu Gaudí (Park Güell), Gran Teatre del Liceu, Jardí Botànic, La Catedral, La Pedrera, La Sagrada Família, Mirador de Colom, MACBA (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona), Museu de la Xocolata, Museu del Futbol Club Barcelona, Museu del Modernisme Català, Museu Marítim, Palau de la Música Catalana and the Pavelló Mies van der Rohe.

**Top Modernista Gems**

- » **La Sagrada Família** (p257) 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** (p252) A gaudily sumptuous home for music to suit the most eclectic of tastes; a giddy example of Modernista fantasy.
- » **La Pedrera** (p265) Gaudí's wavy corner apartment block, with an exquisite period apartment and crowned by a sci-fi roof, is one of the best examples of the star architect's work.
- » **Casa Batlló** (p265) Possibly kookier than La Pedrera, it looks at first glance like some strange sea creature frozen into a building facade. Inside, it's all curls and swirls.
- » **Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau** (p267) Long one of the city's main hospitals, featuring 16 uniquely decorated pavilions.