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1. Collserola, a great European metropolitan park



You already know that Barcelona has everything. It even has one of Europe's biggest metropolitan parks. Collserola, which covers 8,000 hectares, is the city's true 'green lung'. The park borders the city's urban framework and is 17 kilometres long and some six kilometres wide. Tibidabo hill is its highest point (512 metres). Collserola stands between the Llobregat and Besòs rivers and is part of the Coastal Massif, a mountain range 300 kilometres in length which runs parallel to the Mediterranean Sea.

The steep slopes of Collserola overlook the sea and spread inland in a number of gently undulating wooded valleys. Its hilltops have many vantage points offering panoramic views of Barcelona and the sea below.

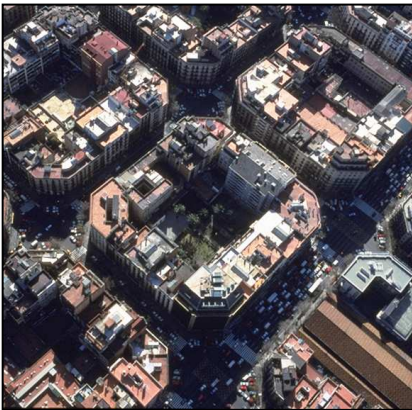
The park is a living being. It is home to nearly all the species to be found in a Mediterranean humid forest, as well as others which are Euro-Siberian in origin. This is due to the diversity of environments in the zone, from riverside woods, reforested pines, and oak groves, to farmland and urban zones.

This explains why Collserola has a mammal population of 19% (40% of Catalonia's total), with the wild boar, fox and civet cat as the most prominent species. Other residents worth mentioning are 134 species of native birds (34% of Catalonia's total), such as sparrowhawks and falcons, not forgetting fish (six species), amphibians (11 species) and reptiles (13 species). The winter months are the most suitable for birdwatching as the autumn migratory patterns are very productive for some species such as birds of prey. 1,600 examples were sighted last year.

Collserola also has an educational vocation. At the Museum of Rural Life, located inside Can Coll, you can find out about Catalan customs, the region's cuisine and crafts. Can Coll is one of the traditional farmhouses (*masies*) in the park, and also has viewing areas, play areas, walking trails and archaeological remains. The Collserola Park Education Centre organises free walking tours on Saturday mornings which are complemented by Friday-night skywatching sessions, which are also useful if you want to discover the sounds of the woodland at night. The fact is, in Barcelona, you can feel nature pulsating in its purest form.

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2. Heart of the city: the Style of the Eixample



A criss-cross of streets neatly arranged in a perfect grid system is one of the images most associated with Barcelona. But this aerial photograph of Barcelona's midtown Eixample area hides the true beauty of the neighbourhood –namely its vibrancy, diversity and elegance.

When Barcelona's Old City grew too big for its original city walls in the 1850s, it spilled out in the most orderly way possible thanks to the architect Ildefons Cerdà. He drew up a blueprint for the city's growth that is more relevant today than ever.

His vision was of a city that could be added to in blocks, with streets running cross-town and up and downtown; these square blocks of buildings, with their famous chamfered corners, would provide a green and clean new city with a lot of fresh air.

Cerdà wanted to create a city where private and public space rubbed shoulders. At the centre of the blocks there would be public gardens, in stark contrast to the small winding and crowded streets of the Old City.

The Eixample is now a model and benchmark for urban living: a place where quality of life comes with the ability to find commerce, services, plazas and green zones all a stone's throw away.

Both residents and visitors find the Eixample provides the ideal mix -a place that is easy to get from A to B on foot, where every corner brings new surprises, somewhere the visitor feels in control of their destiny rather than dwarfed by the surroundings.

In the Eixample you'll find shops of every sort lining the street; above are apartments. The breadshop, the grocer's, and the chemist ... these all rub shoulders with smart designer stores selling clothes or furniture. The Eixample has this buzz to it -not surprising considering it has some 9,000 shops and hundreds of eateries and bars. Two streets stand out in the Eixample, although all have their own charm: Passeig de Gràcia and Rambla de Catalunya. The first is Barcelona's most prestigious boulevard, a sort of Champs Elysees with all the most exclusive brand names and smart restaurants; Rambla de Catalunya has a much more intimate feel to it. Here, fancy Shops, especially jewellers, line this street, although you can also find gems like the grocery stores Colmado Quilez (Rambla de Catalunya, 63) with its old-style personalised service and blue-aproned shop assistants. In the summer the cafés set up tables and chairs so visitors and locals can enjoy the cool of the evening. Look up the street and standing high you'll

see the sparkling lights of Tibidabo fair shinning out. And you know you're really in Barcelona.

In the Eixample there's lots of culture too, with some great museums and galleries. Tourists just love this mix because it is a unique experience, the Eixample experience.

Museums in the Eixample

The Eixample is great for museums. Two of the most popular in Barcelona are found here, namely the Fundació Caixa de Catalunya in the Pedrera and the Fundació Tapies. But don't miss out on the Egyptian Museum or the collection of the highly respected Fundació Godia.

An Eixample for art lovers

The Eixample groups together the city's main art galleries, with 20 or so clustered around a two-block stretch of Consell de Cent, between Balmes and Pg. de Gràcia. It was in the 1960s when the first galleries began to appear here. The Sala Dalmau, at the corner of Consell de Cent and Pg. de Gràcia, is a major player showing contemporary artists and works from Spanish painters who emigrated to Paris before and during the Civil War. Nearby you'll find Galerias Senda, Carles Taché, Toni Tàpies, and too many others to mention. Joan Prats' galleries on Balmes and Rambla Catalunya feature top Catalan and international artists.

Inner courtyards and gardens

The Eixample of Ildefons Cerdà was hijacked by speculators and property developers. The spaces at the centre of the grid system of roads were occupied and built on throughout most of the 20th century. But over the last few years the council has been buying back the land to make gardens and public plazas. They plan to restore some 10% of the 420 blocks over the next few years. Some of the best are: Torre de les Aigües, Casa Elizalde and Palau Robert.

3. The city of walks



Barcelona is to be enjoyed on foot. Our city, which is eight km long and nine km wide, is a physical reality of human dimensions, appropriate for the noble art of walking. Visitors and locals alike appreciate the pleasure of strolling around the city centre. This is why 78% of Barcelona's inhabitants consider themselves to be pedestrians rather than drivers, and in 2001 over one and a half million trips on foot were registered on a single working day.

The truth is that the 435 pedestrian streets, with a total surface area of 130 hectares, provide the perfect reason to step out and enjoy the Mediterranean light and climate. These streets are situated mainly in the district of Ciutat Vella and around the historical centre of the different districts and their local markets. In Barcelona, the straight line is done on foot: 37% of trips of over 5 minutes are walked. Town planning, architecture, shopping and temperature all invite us to do so.

4. Hundred-year-old shop windows



Barcelona is a modern city where you can find the latest in technology and fashion. It is also a traditional point of reference in Europe with a history dating back over 2,000 years. Its streets bear witness to the changing fortunes of mankind and progress. The city's shops showcase a varied and complementary range of products which reflect a cosmopolitan and pioneering city and a legacy and historic wealth which imbues it with a special personality.

Now, a few years into the 21st century, Barcelona still has shops dating back hundreds of years, faithful guardians of tradition and quality which have withstood the ravages of time, modernity and globalisation. Specialisation and love of things well-done are the leitmotif of these shops, the preserves of decades and centuries of good commerce.

Master roasters **E&A Gispert** (*Sombrerers*, 23) produce freshly toasted nuts every day from their wood-burning ovens. Founded in 1851, they stock a wide range of nuts and dried fruits and other produce from around Catalonia. **El Rey de la Magia**, opened in 1881 by the magician Joaquim Partegàs, is one of the oldest magic shops in Europe. The **Cereria Subirà**, is even older. Founded in 1761, it is the oldest shop in Barcelona. Located at *Baixada Llibreteria* 7, its original decor remains intact. Here you will find a wide variety of candles which have continued to adapt with the times.

L'Arca de l'Àvia, located at *Banyes Nous*, 20, stocks antique textiles, home linens and handcrafted textile designs. Highlights include a selection of costumes and textile accessories dating from the 18th to 20th centuries, which are extremely useful for period costume dramas. **El Ingenio** (*Rauric*, 6), has specialised in cardboard and papier mâché masks and figures and fancy-dress costumes since 1838. A delight for imaginative minds.

The **Herboristería del Rey**, at *Del Vidre* 1, is one of the city's oldest shops. Founded in 1823 by Josep Vilà, it was the official herbalist of Queen Isabella II of Spain. Another shop named after a famous personality is the **Casa Beethoven** (*La Rambla*, 97). This music emporium has stocked a wide variety of sheet music and other items since 1886.

5. The city of Beaches



Barcelona is one of the few cities in the world that combines the attractions of urban tourism with the possibility of laying on the beach to sunbathe during the day or to enjoy the animation of the seafront in the evening or at night. Barcelona's beaches, 4.2 kilometers long and just a few minutes from the city, are a unique case in Europe of the integration of a large metropolis with the sea.

Barcelona has always been an important Mediterranean city whose life has been linked to the sea. The recovery of the seafront façade, begun with the construction work done for the 1992 Olympic Games and culminating today with the Barcelona Forum 2004 of the Cultures project, has totally opened Barcelona to the Mediterranean.

Every year, Barcelona's beaches greet more than seven million people who come to enjoy one of the city's largest public and leisure spaces. At the beaches, users find the services and facilities necessary for their visit to be as comfortable and safe as possible, along with a whole series of activities that guarantee a good time.

The cleaning and sanitary control programs for the sand and the sea and the quality of the services and infrastructures have allowed Barcelona's beaches to be awarded five blue flags and an honourable mention in the area of safety for the current year.

The quality and diversity of its beaches make Barcelona an excellent city for all ages year round, but especially during the summer. Taking advantage of the welcoming climate of the city to combine the tranquillity of the Mediterranean waters and the golden colour of its fine sand with the multiple cultural and leisure activities that the city centre offers is a temptation that is hard to match anywhere else.

6. City Sensations



The xamfrà (comer), allusive space of Barcelona, of the Eixample, is an universe full of life, vibrant and stimulating, a human ecosystem filled with emotions, feelings, heartbeats. Like those that can be felt on a sunny winter morning; a 40 year old woman points out the way to the park to her mother, very near an elegant and distinguished looking middle-age gentleman who carries a bag from a bookshop; the painters who put the finishing touches on a new store, next to a group of students from a neighbouring town who have come to Barcelona to admire a Modernista building; or the rush of a working woman who hurriedly comes out of the cash station contrasted with the careful attention two tourists give to a city plan as they try to decipher the way to the Sagrada Familia. And everyone does their own thing, like the 60 year old man who, dressed in a office suit, speeds up as he swings his briefcase. Or the helmet bearing boy who starts his motorcycle under the attentive gaze of the pair of municipal police who are on patrol. A little further on, relaxed in the January sun, three young foreign girls holding their notebooks close to their chests talk about school works.

And the love that tow middle-age Nordic tourists declare, looking distractedly al each other and holding hands; link which also exists between an elderly woman and her poodle, both walking at different paces. A man with a tie who comes out of a café with his coffee in hand, a redheaded girl who films her friends...The discreet pace of the grandfather who, warmly dressed, walks his grandson in a baby carriage. Or no: a man in a jacket walks slowly with his hands in his pocket in front of two oriental tourists sitting on a bench, handing a plm.

li is the bustle of the morning. The newspaper under one's arm; two gesticulating woman plan to meet later on; an elderly gentleman with a shopping cart; the progressive youth who carries a bag from a housewares store, the beautiful couple who enters the cultural centre. The boy passing out publicity, dressed in loud colours. The tree women who are speaking about sales, and the family of tourists from astern Europe who take a photo of themselves in front of an unusual building...It's Mediterranean. It's the street. It's life. It's Barcelona.

7. The “Granja”, a mouth-watering tradition



Barcelona and Catalonia have a long-standing tradition of granjas cafés with their own unique personality specialising in all kinds of dairy products and cakes. A cup of hot chocolate, a plate of freshly whipped cream, a tray of melindros (sponge fingers) and a suizo (a cup of thick hot chocolate with a dollop of whipped cream on the top)

with a pastry are just some of the specialities you can enjoy at a granja, when you get together with friends or while you read the newspaper or a book.

The granjas are more characteristic of the city than tearooms, more spacious than coffee bars and cosier than cake shops. If you want a relaxing morning or a restful afternoon they're the perfect place to go and the legacy of a tradition which loves the flavour of local produce and doing things well. The granjas originate from the time when the stable with the cattle was located just behind the shop where the locals went for a snack. At present, although the farm (also called a granja in catalan) and the café are not to be found in the same place, the raw materials continue to be of the finest quality and home-made.

The granjas open between breakfast and early evening and are frequented by a varied clientele who not only appreciate the flavours and aromas but also the friendly service, usually dispensed by the owner who has a wealth of anecdotes about the history of the city.

The granjas are the true witnesses to the history of the city and have gift for the survival of confectionery. Step inside for an unbeatable gift for the senses and a fine souvenir of Barcelona.

8. Jewels of the Barcelona Bus Turístic

Monastery of Pedralbes. A jewel of Catalan Gothic architecture



Barcelona gives visitors the opportunity to see the city's landmarks on the Barcelona Bus Turístic. One of the routes stops at Pedralbes Monastery (www.bcn.cat), a jewel of Catalan Gothic religious art. The building is not only one of the finest examples of this medieval architectural style, but also provides a unique opportunity to compare it with the many examples of Gothic civil architecture around Barcelona, such as the palazzos on Carrer Montcada.

Pedralbes Monastery comprises a group of buildings which take the visitor back in time. The monastery complex, with its church, is set out around a spacious three-tier cloister, which provides access to the main rooms: the dormitory, the refectory, the chapter house, the abbey and the nuns' cells. It provides a haven of peace amid the noise and bustle of the big city and is also an example of the dedication shown by the people of Barcelona in looking after the treasures which history has bequeathed them. The monastery is a prime example of the way the local heritage has been preserved in a city which has its eyes set firmly on the future, yet is still aware of the importance of preserving its cultural heritage. This is true to such an extent that the monastery still houses a magnificent museum showcasing a whole host of works of art, liturgical objects and furniture which the nuns of Saint Clare have assembled over the centuries with dedication and great determination.

As visitors walk around the complex, they soon become aware of the virtues of Pedralbes Monastery, which is a designated Monument of Historic and Artistic Interest. More recently, the monastery housed part of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection of paintings. The perimeter of the monastery grounds was originally surrounded by a wall, of which only two watchtowers and two gateways survive. The church consists of a single nave and used to feature a Gothic altarpiece by Jaume Huguet, which has been lost. The three-tier cloister is 40 metres long and comprises wide arches underpinned by numerous columns. The capitals are decorated with the emblems of the Kings and Queens of Aragon and the House of Montcada. Another outstanding feature is the Chapel of Sant Miquel where a number of paintings by Ferrer Bassa can be seen. They were done in 1346, and show the influence of the Italian painter Giotto on his work.

The visit transports us back to medieval times and gives a precise idea of what life was like in this religious community, which was founded in 1327 by Queen Elisenda of Montcada. The monarch took particular interest in this monastery and granted it special privileges. As a result of her patronage, it came under the direct protection of the city, through the Consell de Cent, or Council of the Hundred, who

made a firm commitment to its defence. It was Elisenda herself who had a palazzo built adjacent to the building which she moved to on the death of her husband, King Jaume II The Just, in 1327. She lived there until she died 40 years later. Her tomb, which is currently being restored, is one of the most important Catalan medieval funerary ensembles. The tomb has two sides: one of them, inside the monastery church, shows Elisenda the queen and, another, inside the cloister, shows her more religious side. The statue which stands over the queen's tomb shows the two aspects which influenced her persona the most: one side shows the queen in a short dress and wearing her crown, whereas the other shows her wearing widows weeds. They also represent the two sides of a monastery which is as majestic as it is austere.

Mies van der Rohe Pavillon. An exponent of modern architecture



The Mies van der Rohe Pavilion (www.miesbcn.com) is one of the most outstanding examples of modern architecture that can be seen today in Barcelona. It is located at the foot of Montjuïc Hill, which was the site of the city's Olympic Games, and is easily accessible on the Barcelona Bus Turístic. It is also included on the Barcelona Card, which features discounts on public transport, visitor attractions and museums. A visit to this landmark building involves delving into a world devoted to the discussion, dissemination and awareness of issues related to contemporary architecture and urban planning. An atmosphere of experimentation, a thirst for knowledge and innovation permeate its walls. The building is the headquarters of a foundation which fosters research into the works of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the Modern Movement. It should come as no surprise if a lecture, exhibition or workshop are being held, or an art installation is on show, when you decide to visit this masterpiece of modern architecture.

The pavilion is a symbolic landmark of the Modern Movement. As soon as visitors enter the building, they understand why it has been studied and interpreted so thoroughly by experts, and inspired the oeuvre of several generations of architects. Traditionally, Barcelona has been open to architectural experimentation, as is borne out by Gaudí's visionary legacy. This pavilion provides irrefutable proof of this innovative spirit which has marked the urban expansion of the Catalan capital. It was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) as the German national pavilion for Barcelona's 1929 International Exhibition, which was held on Montjuïc, where you can still see other elements from that event. The pavilion was originally designed to host the official reception presided over by King Alfonso XIII together with the German authorities. When the exhibition finished, the pavilion was dismantled. However, as the years went by, it became a key work in Mies van der Rohe's career and 20th-century architecture as a whole. This led Barcelona Municipal Council to rebuild the pavilion in 1986.

Visitors should pay particular attention to the use of materials such as glass, steel and four different types of marble (Roman travertine, green marble from the Alps, ancient green marble from Greece and golden onyx from the Atlas Mountains) which clad the building. Another attractive feature is the “Barcelona chair”, which Mies van der Rohe designed especially for the pavilion. It has a metal frame with leather seating surfaces and, over the years, has become a modern design icon, to such an extent, in fact, that it is still manufactured and sold today. Another of the key elements in the architectural ensemble of the pavilion is the bronze reproduction of the sculpture *Dawn* by Georg Kolbe, a contemporary of Mies van der Rohe. Masterfully placed at one end of the small pond, the sculpture is reflected not only in the water but also in the marble and glass, thereby creating the sensation that it is multiplied in space, while its curves contrast with the geometrical purity of the building. A true architectural spectacle..

9. Picasso's treasures at the Museu Nacional

Barcelona shows the painting *Dona amb barret i coll de pell* (“*Woman in hat and fur collar*”).



The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) has added this important work by Pablo Picasso to its permanent collection. The Museum has opened an interesting new exhibition room devoted to this remarkable universal artist, where this painting will be shown together with eight more works by the Malaga-born artist, which will be held for one year. The indisputable star of this new mini-gallery was recently acquired by the Spanish State and it is one of the many portraits that he painted of Marie-

Thérèse Walter, his companion from 1927 to 1935, and the mother of his daughter Maya. In the portrait, Picasso completed an exhaustive analytical exercise and subjected the youth and personality of Marie-Thérèse to a thousand metamorphic transfigurations. The artist converted the model into an icon of sensuality through a rich pictorial language of distorted forms. *Dona amb barret i coll de pell* is, without doubt, one of the works which struck a resounding key note in 20th century artistic expression.

The MNAC, which opens visitors' eyes to 1,000 years of art, has now unveiled this portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter in a room exclusively devoted to Picasso, alongside eight pieces from the Catherine Hutin collection. These paintings are illustrative of the artist's peak periods. However, in this case, it is most interesting to compare them with the MNAC's collections of modern Catalan art and, especially, of the avant-garde period. Of the eight paintings which accompany the portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter, there are two from the time when Picasso was working with the Ballets Russes and had begun a period described as a 'return to order'. The canons of synthetic cubism can be seen in the oil painting *Home en una butaca* ["Man in an armchair"] (1917), while *Natura morta amb fruitera* ["Still life with fruit bowl"] (1920) delves deeper into decorative cubism. There are also four works which show the erotic side of the artist, with surrealist influences, full of freedom and violence. Finally, the Picasso room is completed with the portraits of Nusch Éluard and Dora Maar, who the artist used as models in the late 1930s. In total, nine of Picasso's treasures await discovery.

Info: www.mnac.es

10. Shopping in Sants, Gràcia and Sarrià



Shops with their own distinctive identity on the city's retail thoroughfares. Going shopping in the Catalan capital doesn't mean you have to visit the same shops all the time, or walk along the same streets. The range of products is as varied and wide as it is unusual. And to ensure shoppers make the most of the retail experience, the city is home to the Barcelona Shopping Line (www.barcelonaturisme.cat), which stretches

for over 5 kilometres through some of the busiest neighbourhoods around La Rambla to the exclusive shops on the Diagonal and Passeig de Gràcia, which features some of Gaudí's major landmarks. This stunning retail showcase continues beyond these areas to show visitors the traditional lifestyle enjoyed by the locals in the city's other neighbourhoods and the much-vaunted creativity of its designers. The fact is that Barcelona has 17 shopping streets that provide a unique opportunity to discover all the city's attractions as you shop.

Some of the best examples are the shopping street of Sants and Creu Coberta. This is Europe's longest shopping street and features over 350 shops, bars and restaurants serving a wide variety of cuisine. It is a very busy part of town and a must for all passengers arriving in Barcelona on the high-speed train. Here, retail life takes place in a part of town dating back over 1,000 years, which was once a major industrial centre. Visitors can stop off at the Parc de l'Espanya Industrial or see the early 20th-century buildings with their art-nouveau elements and the common motif of two cows' heads on their façades.

11. Barcelona: passió pel motor

The Circuit de Catalunya offers major attractions all the year round just a short distance away from the city.



It comes as no surprise to anyone that the world's leading Formula-1 teams choose the Circuit de Catalunya (www.circuitcat.com) as a test bed for their racing cars or that it is one of the drivers' most highly rated tracks. And it isn't just another motor-racing venue among those on the list of the World Formula-1 and MotoGP Championships. It's much more. And the professionals who compete there and the thousands of fans who enjoy their performances from the stands know this. From the time it opened, in 1991, the Circuit de Catalunya has been the host venue for the Spanish Formula-1 Grand Prix and, in 1992, Barcelona's Olympic Year, it joined the World Motorcycle Championships. The Circuit plays host to two of the world's foremost racing events. And in 2009 it will keep its appointment with its fans, competing teams and sponsors.

Ever since it opened, the Circuit de Catalunya has inherited the passion of an entire country for motor-racing and its strong ties with the industry, with legendary marques such as Hispano-Suiza, Pegaso and Bultaco, Montesa, Derbi and Ossa. It has an extensive roster of top-class drivers and riders and is associated with other racetracks where people have lived and relived the breathtaking spectacle of motorbike and car races. Not for nothing did the city circuits of Pedralbes and Montjuïc achieve prominence in Formula-1 racing in the 1950s and 60s. Montjuïc was also the setting for motorcycle races in the 1970s. This passion for motor sports is still very much alive today and has been boosted with the superb facilities at the Circuit de Catalunya. The track has 16 stands, two of them covered, and seating for over 70,000 spectators. In addition to this, there is a public enclosure, or pelouse, which can hold a further 30,000 people. In addition to this, the Circuit has 16,000 members who pay an annual membership fee giving them access to all the races, training sessions during the Formula-1 season as well as discounts. They can also enjoy an exclusive area which will be refurbished in 2009.

Over the past six years, the Circuit has made a firm commitment to the quality of its facilities, following the "Double Q" formula: to hold the largest Quantity of spectators, while maintaining the necessary Quality in terms of services and spaces, with improved access, and increased parking spaces, as well as 400 parking bays for coaches. The rail links between Barcelona and Montmeló station, and the agreements with the Sagalés bus company to shuttle spectators to and from the station, are

advantages which have been welcomed by tour operators and visitors. The Circuit de Catalunya, which is a participating venue on the Barcelona Card (www.barcelonaturisme.cat), the city card featuring free offers and discounts, is just 30 km away from the Catalan capital and can be easily reached by car on the AP-7 motorway. In fact, it has rapid road links with Barcelona, the airport, port, the regional airports of Girona and Reus, and those in the south of France.

Barcelona is the focus of attention for all motorcycle fans when the Circuit hosts the Catalonia Grand Prix, which is part of the MotoGP World Championships. The city embraces motor sports and offers its thousands of visitors, particularly those hailing from France, all its tourist attractions, as a complement to the training sessions and races. It should come as no surprise that 78% of the people who visit the city decide to come back. And half of them repeat the experience every year because they always enjoy it. In fact, the percentage of hotel occupancy rises to 90%. The companies sponsoring the Grands Prix have their own hospitality suites at the track, with VIP stands and 37 exclusive VIP suites with excellent views of the pit-lane and the starting grid. There are also 18 Platinum suites and 18 Gold suites on the main grandstand, which can hold 10,000 spectators.

The Circuit also runs guided tours. They are the perfect opportunity to gain access to restricted areas, such as the podium, press office and the spectacular main straight. These are all complemented with a comprehensive range of retail and social facilities. The versatility of the venue makes it the ideal place for organising presentations or incentive workshops for companies, meetings and all kinds of image and communication events. These can be tailor-made to suit the client's needs, and can include a wide range of activities such as 4x4 tests, formula races, go-karting and panoramic helicopter flights (there are two heliports nearby). The Circuit also has a catering service. With all these attractions, it should come as no surprise that every year over one million visitors come to the track, with over 200,000 people attending each of the Grands Prix. This haven for motor-racing fans has done justice to its prestige and that of Barcelona as a city traditionally linked to the world of motor sports.

12. 24 hores a Barcelona

An itinerary designed so that you can enjoy the leisure and culture of the Catalan capital in just one day.



Can you get to know Barcelona in 24 hours? It may seem an impossible task but with a well-planned itinerary (www.barcelonaturisme.cat) you can see some of its major landmarks and sights. The bustling, central plaza, the Plaça de Catalunya, is a good place to start. From here you can get to one of the city's main shopping streets, the Portal de l'Àngel, where you'll find a wide selection of leading fashion brands. As you head down to the sea, you come to the charming little square, the Plaça del Pi, one of the most delightful spots in the Gothic Quarter. Here you can admire the 14th-century church of Santa Maria del Pi, outside which artists and painters display their paintings at weekends. There are usually stalls selling artisan foods. From the square you can enter the Carrer de la Palla, which transports you back to medieval times and leads to the cathedral: Barcelona's most spectacular Gothic landmark. Its magnificent neo-Gothic façade conceals an impressive interior replete with works of art. Its Gothic cloisters are well worth a visit. The Plaça de la Catedral is the perfect place for a coffee at one of the pavement cafès, as you look at emblematic multicoloured roof of the Santa Caterina Market in the background. Here, the bustling crowds of tourists mingle with the locals going about their everyday affairs.

The Carrer del Bisbe, which invites you to enjoy its Gothic and neo-Gothic architecture, leads to the back of the cathedral, where you'll find the Plaça de Sant Jaume, the political hub of Catalonia and the city. Once the site of the Roman colony of Barcino, it is now home to the Palau de la Generalitat, with its Renaissance façade, and City Hall, with its neo-Gothic columns. Nearby, is the Plaça del Rei, surrounded by the former palace of the Catalan monarchs, the majestic Saló del Tinell the beautiful chapel of Santa Àgata and the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat. The latter contains some of the city's most important Roman remains. Indeed, as you walk through these streets you'll come across the remains of the ancient wall. If you head back in the same direction you came from, crossing the Carrer Ferran, you'll be able to see the Plaça Reial, with its pavement cafès and restaurants, arcades and central fountain. Now, you can continue with the itinerary and return to the Plaça Sant Jaume and head towards the Via Laietana. On the other side of this major street, you'll continue exploring medieval Barcelona until you come to the palazzos on the Carrer Montcada, which are home to the Museu Picasso and the Museu Barbier-Mueller with its collection of pre-Columbian art. The Carrer Montcada leads to the Passeig del Born and the church of Santa Maria del Mar, which bears witness to the greatness of Barcelona during medieval times. At lunchtime,

the old harbour, or Port Vell, offers a wide array of restaurants and, nearby, the fishermen's district, the Barceloneta, tempts the visitor's palate with the most authentic fish and seafood dishes. In the afternoon, opposite the harbour, you'll see the landmark monument to Christopher Columbus which marks the gateway to La Rambla, the perfect place to stroll and see the street performers, flower stalls, the Palau Güell and the Boqueria Market. Back in the Plaça Catalunya, you can head up the Passeig Gràcia, with its luxury shops and modernista buildings, including Antoni Gaudí's Casa Batlló and Casa Milà. A few streets north-east of here, the Sagrada Família rises up imposingly to mark the end of a day which you might like to round off with dinner at the Olympic Marina.

13. The whole of Barcelona covered

Seven sightseeing routes with one public transport ticket.



Visiting Barcelona has just become more interesting with MetroWalks: a new service which includes a public transport ticket and, for two euros more, a unique guide featuring seven city routes, each of them with detailed descriptions of the itinerary, photographs and maps of the location and the metro network. The seven itineraries, which cover most of Barcelona's districts, can be done on foot, by bus, metro and tram.

The MetroWalks guide is available from the city's tourist information points and features an outline of the seven itineraries giving the approximate time they take to complete, pictures and a detailed description of each point of interest and a map of the route. All the routes commence in the centre of Barcelona, in Plaça de Catalunya or Plaça d'Urquinaona, and are designed to be accessible to all visitors. If a section of the itinerary is on steeper terrain this is indicated in the guide. The public transport card provides unlimited travel during its validity period: for instance, two days.

The seven itineraries in the MetroWalks guide cover Barcelona from end to end and include places not usually featured in travel guides. With MetroWalks you'll be able to reach all the different parts of the city. The first route comprises a visit to La Salut, which includes interesting landmarks, such as the chapel and Park Güell. It also stops off at El Coll, which stands 300 metres above sea level, and the Vall d'Hebron, where you'll discover some of the sporting facilities built for the Olympic Games. The second itinerary covers the uptown neighbourhoods of Pedralbes, Sarrià and Sant Gervasi, which date back to the Middle Ages. On the third itinerary you'll discover Gràcia, one of the neighbourhoods with the most strongly defined personality, which is full of artists' and artisans' workshops, hidden corners and examples of popular culture, and also Tibidabo, on Collserola Ridge, surmounted by the church of the Sagrat Cor, the Fabra Observatory and the amusement park. The fourth itinerary takes you to Les Glòries, one of the city's most modern areas, with the Agbar Tower, the concert hall, L'Auditori, and the Teatre Nacional; Poblenou, a former wetland site which has become the focus of the city's technological and architectural revolution which still retains the imprint of its 19th-century factories; and Diagonal Mar, the city's newest neighbourhood which was created under the auspices of the Forum of Cultures. The fifth itinerary visits La Ribera, the city's hub of trade during the Middle Ages, where some of the palazzos of the era still survive; El Born, where a series of well-preserved medieval ruins have been discovered; Barceloneta, the fishing district, and the Olympic Village, which provided accommodation for 15,000 athletes during the 1992 Olympics

in a series of unique buildings. The sixth itinerary leads to Guinardó and Horta, where its farmhouses and cottages still provide glimpses of its agricultural and wine-growing past. And the guide concludes at Sant Andreu, an industrial and strategically important neighbourhood, with its irrigation channel, the Rec Comtal; Sant Martí, which retains its village atmosphere, and El Clot, a neighbourhood of buildings and public spaces which combine tradition and modernity, such as the former flour mill, La Farinera. The guide will certainly provide visitors with an extremely useful, unique and original tool which will enable them to discover many of the outlying neighbourhoods in the Catalan capital at street level, while they absorb the very essence of living and coexisting in Barcelona.

14. Barcelona, city of sport

The Catalan capital's sporting spirit remains alive and well.



Barcelona is a city of fair play, where culture and sport join hands in an expression of solidarity and community spirit. Here, in 1992, the Olympic Games and their core values wrote one of the most glorious chapters in their history, reflecting the local community's devotion to sport. Football is a sporting discipline which has the greatest number of followers in the city. The Catalan capital has two representatives in the **Professional Spanish Football League**: FC Barcelona and RCD Espanyol. Barça, the current European champions, are Unicef Goodwill Ambassadors, and their playing style mirrors the virtues of the city: original, talented, attractive and effective. There's no denying that Barcelona is a highly cosmopolitan metropolis, which understands sport in the broadest sense of the word.

Perhaps this is why visiting the city always provides the opportunity to attend a major sporting event, because the competition calendar, included in the Barcelona Sport programme, is extensive and varied, with **hockey** tournaments, such as the Epiphany Cup; **polo**, with the prestigious International Tournament organised by the Reial Club de Polo; equestrian events, with the **International Showjumping Competition**, and **volleyball**, with the Beach Volley World Tour, to name just four.

The Catalan capital is a standard bearer for Spanish sport. This is borne out by the fact that, as long ago as the late 19th century, it pioneered the introduction of a great many sporting disciplines to Spain. Barcelona is a training centre for elite sportsmen and women, from the medal-winning synchronised swimming team to leading tennis players. It is also a city that organises a wide range of community sporting competitions, such as the athletics races which beat participation records year after year. However, at the same time, every week or, practically every day, any sports fan can enjoy a top-level game of football, hockey, handball, rugby and basketball, to name just some of the many examples.

Barcelona has a long-standing tradition in the organisation of major sporting events. The Olympic Games was the defining moment, but the city was also one of the host cities for the 1982 Football World Cup and has staged European and world championships in different disciplines. In fact, in 2010, the city will be hosting the

European Athletics Championships, which were preceded this year by the **International Athletics Meeting** and the **Marathon**, which was held in March with high numbers of athletes having registered. In November, the city organises the **Jean Bouin**, the city's oldest athletics race, now in its 85th year, which attracts top-level runners.

The Catalan capital is also on the ATP World Tour circuit and, in April, hosts the **Conde de Godó Trophy**, which attracts tennis players of the calibre of Rafael Nadal. Another major event, which draws thousands of fans, is the **Spanish Formula 1 Grand Prix**, which brings the world's top racing drivers to Barcelona in May. The fact is, the local residents love motor-racing, as is proven by the city's hosting of the **Catalan Motorcycle Grand Prix** in June, and a round of the **Indoor Trial World Championship** in February. Some of the top participants at these events are Catalan or hail from Barcelona, such as Jaume Alguersuari, the youngest Formula 1 driver who pilots a Toro Rosso.

As the Euro-Mediterranean capital, Barcelona always has its sights set on the sea and organises sporting competitions, such as the non-stop yachting event, the **Barcelona World Race**, which, at the end of next year, will once again use the port of Barcelona as its departure and finishing point. Or the **Conde de Godó Trophy**, another yachting competition, organised in May by the Reial Club Nàutic. The fact is, the city is keen to maintain its presence on the world sporting circuit, contributing its experience and dedication. The final example of the enthusiastic sporting spirit of the local community came in July when the city hosted a stage of the **Tour de France**. The cyclists were welcomed by some 600,000 fans who created a large yellow "wave of welcome". There's no getting away from the fact that sporting colours shine as brightly as a rainbow in Barcelona.

Passion for Ibrahimovic and Nakamura

Football fans are in luck in Barcelona. This year, Pep Guardiola's Barça have signed the Swedish star player, and one of the world's top forwards, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, from a top Italian club. And this year's star signing at RCD Espanyol is the Japanese attacking midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura, one of Asian football's ace players.

An elite stadium

This year sees RCD Espanyol move to its new purpose-built stadium, which can hold up to 40,500 spectators. Designed using state-of-the-art technology and according to environmental criteria, the venue has been classified as a UEFA Elite Stadium.

15. New “bistronomy”

Barcelona has a wide variety of small gastronomic restaurants.



It is no coincidence that the Catalan capital is home to a good number of Michelin-starred chefs or is among the world’s top five restaurant cities. In recent years, however, a new culinary movement has been spreading throughout the city, which the food journalist Pau Arenós has dubbed “bistronomic”. This term refers to the large variety of small gastronomic restaurants serving food at affordable prices which are springing up in all the city’s neighbourhoods. At the helm are highly trained chefs, who have taken their lead from Ferran Adrià and his world-famous Bulli. These masters of new culinary technology create dishes with locally sourced seasonal produce and have breathed new life into the famous traditional Catalan cuisine by their pioneering techniques.

The “bistronomics” are numbered among the city’s leading small restaurants and are often family-run businesses. Most of them are in the Eixample, which lends added architectural appeal to the diners’ culinary experience. Most “bistronomics” serve set menus at lunchtime at highly competitive prices, which makes it possible to experience the creativity of the chefs without having to spend a fortune. In the evening, gourmets can sample their à la carte dishes, at prices that are also affordable, particularly when you consider this is top-flight cuisine. In fact, some of these “bistronomic” eateries have been recognised by the Michelin Guide, reinforcing the international standing of this new Barcelona culinary phenomenon. This is certainly a good opportunity to discover Barcelona’s new creative, attractive and flavoursome gastronomic culture.

16. A city with a maritime spirit

Barcelona concentra una gran oferta d'oci en aigües del Mediterrani.



The Catalan capital is a city that lives facing the sea. It cares for its coastline just like a mother who watches her children grow up by being with them at all times. These are just some of the reasons why the city offers visitors countless opportunities to experience the sensations of the Mediterranean to the full. So much so that Turisme de Barcelona (www.barcelonaturisme.com) now gives you the chance to discover the attractions of the Barcelona coastline on foot with **Barcelona Walking Tours Marina**, which take in 16 landmarks, such as the Columbus Monument, the Rambla de Mar, the World Trade Center and the Olympic Village. The tours are rounded off with a sea cruise on Las Golondrinas, one of the most popular pleasure boats and a maritime icon for the people of Barcelona for many years now. However, there are other ways of viewing the Catalan capital from the sea. **Barcelona Mar** allows you to go out to sea on a boat and see the Sagrada Família, the cathedral and the Agbar Tower from another viewpoint. The memory is truly indelible.

Some people consider the Barcelona seafront as an open-air museum. Here you'll find two attractions that are particularly worthy of attention in this showcase of culture and leisure. One is the **schooner Santa Eulàlia**, a vessel dating from 1918, and restored by the Museu Marítim, which is so deeply rooted in Barcelona and is the boat used every 5th January by the Three Wise Men to bring gifts to the city's children. The boat runs educational and cultural activities. Another work of art is the **Orsom**, Catalonia's largest, most modern and stable catamaran, which offers sailing in comfort and even live music. Another element in the collection of spaces, events and activities that shape this area of Barcelona with its distinctly maritime feel.

Inside this open-air museum that covers the entire Barcelona coastline you can find unique buildings, such as the new hotel in the shape of a sail or the large photovoltaic cell and triangular building on the Forum site. The city has also reclaimed land from the sea in an environmentally friendly way. Examples of this include the Port Vell and the Maremàgnum, which brings together marine species at the Aquàrium. However, it is the local people who bring Barcelona's maritime neighbourhood to life. The fact that the city centre, with La Rambla, the Columbus Monument and all the Gothic landmarks, is close to the port and a stone's throw from the beaches, can be seen in the open character of its people. The clearest example of this can be found in the genuine lifestyle of the Barceloneta, Barcelona's seafaring neighbourhood par excellence. All these aspects bring the city and the sea into personal contact.

From one end to the other, Barcelona's seafront forms a continuous line stretching for 4.5 kilometres, which can be explored on foot, by bike or on one of the pleasure cruises. Few other major European capitals offer so many recreational attractions right by the sea, from the popular snack bars, or *chiringuitos*, to the Grand Casino, as well as fish and seafood restaurants, green areas, fashion boutiques and luxury hotels. It is no surprise that visitors rate the quality of the eight beaches so highly. Sant Sebastià beach holds open-air film screenings in summer as well as live relays of operas from the Gran Teatre del Liceu. This year you can enjoy two new attractions: the thrills of the Barcelona Urban Forest and the SphereMania Barcelona, at the Parc del Fòrum, right by the waters' edge. Right by the Mediterranean.

17. Barcelona, cultural hub

Modernisme, Gothic architecture... The city is constantly renewing and improving the rich heritage of its legacy.



Barcelona looks after its culture. In an attempt to safeguard its memory and enjoy it to the full in the present, the city continues to make new discoveries about its Roman and medieval past, and showcase its iconic landmarks in all their glory. An example is the new gallery in the **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** (www.mnac.cat) which features a permanent exhibition of Gothic art which, together with works from its Renaissance holdings, the Cambó bequest and the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection, has been closed since last September for major improvements in the presentation and conservation of its works. Highlights include the altarpieces which have now been mounted on metal structures to make their viewing a unique experience.

Barcelona also has the good fortune to be an open-air museum. The monuments and landmarks spread throughout the city bear the footprints of a past that has endured to the present day through its pledge to preserve them. This is why the city can now reveal with pride the newly restored façade and bell towers of its other **Gothic cathedral, Santa Maria del Mar**. The restoration project took almost a year of painstaking, laborious work which has revealed the church in all its splendour. In fact, in the city centre, within a half-kilometre radius, we can find four key examples of religious Gothic art: Santa Maria del Mar, a church that has inspired great novelists; the cathedral, which has also been undergoing restoration; Santa Maria del Pi, which is also being refurbished, and Sant Just i Pastor. In the case of Santa Maria del Mar, the restoration project will continue and focus on the sides of the church and the choir stalls. However, this won't prevent visitors from enjoying the façade and bell towers in all their grandeur.

In addition to its important examples of civic and religious Gothic buildings, Barcelona also has a wealth of architectural and artistic gems associated with its home-grown art-nouveau movement, modernisme. The works by Gaudí, and also Domènech i Montaner, are known around the world and attract millions of visitors to the city every year. In this context, and as the result of a private initiative by the gallery Gothsland, the Catalan capital has opened the **Museu del Modernisme de Catalunya** (www.mmcat.cat) to the public. The museum has been included on the Modernisme Trail and is housed in a centrally located modernista building designed by Enric Sagnier. It showcases 350 works by 42 of the most representative artists from this Catalan art movement.

The holdings come from the private collection that the antique dealers and gallery owners, Fernando Pinós and María Guirao, have amassed during their 40 years in the business. All the different artistic disciplines are represented, from painting and sculpture to furniture and the decorative arts. One of the gems of the collection is the beautiful marble urn by Eusebi Arnau. The museum also features works by Antoni Gaudí, Joaquim Mir, Santiago Rusiñol, Ramon Casas, Alexandre de Riquer and Josep Llimona and is another example of the way Barcelona not only preserves but sings the praises of its heritage and presents it to its visitors under the best of conditions.

Another example of the important archaeological explorations being carried out in the city is the restoration of the domus romana and the medieval underground grain stores on Carrer de la Fruita, in the city centre. The **Museu d'Història de Barcelona** (www.museuhistoria.bcn.es) has opened a new space to the public where the remains of Roman Barcino and those of a house from the medieval Jewish Quarter coexist on the same site. You can make out a mansion and three shops dating from the 4th century, right by the ancient forum; and also six grain stores beneath the Casa Norell, which was built in 1851 next to the Plaça Sant Jaume.

Barcelona doesn't just look back to its past. Even though Roman, medieval and modernista art comprise its most important artistic legacy, the city also makes an important commitment to contemporary artists. This is reflected in the **Miquel Barceló** retrospective exhibition at **CaixaForum** (www.fundacio.lacaixa.es) which looks at the last 25 years of the career of this world-renowned, and to a certain extent, enigmatic artist. The show, which is entitled *La solitud organisativa*, gives us the opportunity to understand the mystery, adrenalin and personal uncertainties behind Barceló's work.

18. Barcelona, the perfect setting for a crime novel

Characters such as Carvalho, Méndez and Petra Delicado, are some of the city's most distinctive inhabitants.



Barcelona is one of Europe's crime novel capitals. Great writers have portrayed the city, following in the footsteps of detectives, police officers and criminals who are among the main characters of crime fiction. These stories take place in real settings that readers can visit and recognise while feeling part of these narratives. There are a number of places that have made Barcelona a magnet for lovers of this literary genre, but one stands out above all the others. The former Barrio Chino, which grew up in the shadow of the port, which is one of the most important in Europe in terms of passenger and goods ships. The constant comings and goings of people from around the world have meant that this part of the Raval has inspired some of the most thrilling crime novels. The leading exponent of the genre was the writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who created **Pepe Carvalho**, arguably the city's most charismatic detective. There are other noteworthy characters, including Inspector **Méndez**, from the pen of Francisco González Ledesma, and Inspector **Petra Delicado**, by Alicia Giménez Bartlett, and not forgetting other writers such as Andreu Martín and Teresa Solana. Some of these characters have also been brought to life in another type of fiction: film.

Pepe Carvalho is one of the crime novel's leading characters who has had the greatest impact on Barcelona's streets, bars and restaurants. His adventures cover the entire city, from the mountains to the sea, but he is mostly to be found in the Raval, the district where there is a square dedicated to the memory of Vázquez Montalbán. Strangely enough, Carvalho lives uptown in a house in Vallvidrera, but every day he comes down to La Rambla, where he has his office, near the current Colom fronton court. You can follow in Pepe Carvalho's footsteps as you walk down Carrer Ferran, visit the Boqueria Market or cross the Via Laietana and head towards the Ribera district and the Born. There is one distinctive feature in Montalbán's work: gastronomy. El Glaciar, in the Plaça Reial; Casa Leopoldo, Can Lluís and Quo Vadis, in the Raval; and Senyor Parellada, on Carrer Argenteria, are some of the bars and restaurants where Carvalho tucked into a good meal. As well as strolling through and eating at the same places as the famous detective, you can take a dip at Barceloneta beach, which the detective also enjoyed, drink from a fountain near the church of Santa Maria del Mar and take the metro to the Avinguda Paral·lel.

Inspector Méndez is another fictional character who frequents the Raval. He lives on Carrer Nou de la Rambla and is a regular at the London Bar, which dates back more than a century. The detective's stamping ground includes Montjuïc Hill; the music

hall El Molino, which is currently being renovated; the Sant Antoni Market, with its second-hand book market; and the Poble Sec district, which is a melting pot of cultures. Inspector Petra Delicado lives in Poblenou, and frequents different places in Barcelona and its outskirts, including Sant Cugat del Vallès. You'll find her in the Plaça de Sant Felip Neri and the district of Horta. Teresa Solana is one of the authors who sets her novels uptown. Her characters' exploits take place in the area above the Avinguda Diagonal. They include the detective Eduard, who buys his bread from the bakery Foix de Sarrià. The bookshop *Negra y Criminal*, at number 5, Carrer la Sal, 5, is one of the best places in Barcelona to dip into this world, taking part in literary discussions accompanied by a nice glass of wine and a plate of mussels. Every winter, the shop organises *BCNegra*, the city's crime fiction festival.

19. Barcelona, unforgettable experiences

Barcelona offers its most select visitors unique activities.



What does it feel like to drive a Formula 1 car? Or to take a helicopter ride over the Sagrada Família and La Pedrera? Can culinary ecstasy be achieved by tasting dishes prepared by the world's top chefs? In Barcelona it can, because everything is possible in the capital of Mediterranean Europe, because it offers everything to make it possible. For years now, the city has been an exclusive travel destination for visitors who want to enjoy unique and unforgettable experiences. There is a special programme, Barcelona Premium (www.barcelonapremium.cat) and its range of activities grows year after year with new establishments and new challenges for visitors. A luxury stay in the Catalan capital is synonymous with experiencing everlasting sensations. There are as many possibilities as you can imagine, and many more besides, ranging from private tours of *modernista* buildings that are usually closed to the public, to hiring a wide range of dream vehicles, from amazing yachts to helicopters (www.cathelicopters.com), limousines and even racing cars. Barcelona doesn't only have a sporting marina, made famous during the 1992 Olympics; it has an airport for private jets, a heliport and even a race track (www.circuit.cat) which hosts Formula 1 and motorcycle Grands Prix every year. Petrol heads can try their hand at driving the best Ferraris, Lamborghinis and Porsches in the world. They can also be a co-driver in a Formula 1 car, experience the Renault Formula 1 circuit and drive a classic off-road buggy. The activities are never-ending in a city that has always lived side by side with top-level motor sports.

There are other ways of enjoying exclusive experiences without needing to fly, drive or sail. Doing some retail therapy in the city's most luxurious shopping areas is a way of discovering a captivating Barcelona that brings together one of the widest and most unique ranges of clothing, jewellery and designs. You can buy tailor-made dresses, which will please even the most demanding brides. The world's leading brands are represented in the Catalan capital and many even hail from here. There are sales advisors who will help choose the products that best suit the customer's needs. Personalised assistance in exclusive shops such as Loewe (www.loewe.com), Bagues (www.bagues.com), Union Suiza (www.unionsuiza.com), Santa Eulalia (www.santaaulalia.com) and many others will ensure the experience is an unforgettable one. These shops have private showrooms and staff that speak several languages. Shoppers can also have their purchases sent to their hotel.

And to replenish energy levels there's nothing better than trying out some of the city's exclusive spas and wellness centres, many of them at luxury hotels, such as the

Juan Carlos I (www.hrjuancarlos.com), W Barcelona (www.w-barcelona.cat), Mandarin Oriental (www.mandarinoriental.es) and Arts (www.hotelartsbarcelona.com). Most of these de-luxe establishments have Michelin-starred restaurants, such as Àbac (www.abacbarcelona.com), Condes de Barcelona (www.condesdebarcelona.com) and Omm (www.hotelomm.es). But that's not all. Barcelona's has a rich and varied luxury culinary offering, ranging from private tastings to the busy Boqueria Market (www.boqueria.info), from wine tastings (www.vilaviniteca.es and www.monvinic.com) to the chance to check out the skills of the chefs at some of the city's longest-standing restaurants, such as Via Veneto (www.viavenetorestaurant.com). Top-notch adventure, fun and relaxation. Barcelona has all this in store for its most select visitors.

20. Barcelona, a treasure-filled legacy

The Catalan capital brings together a vast heritage of churches, cloisters and religious art.



Barcelona feels proud of its heritage, because it is through its legacy that we can better understand the cosmopolitan, innovative, open and, above all, creative character of the city and its inhabitants. This can be seen in the architectural landscape silhouetted on the horizon of present-day Barcelona that connects its ancient past with its modernity. In the streets, you can see a series of buildings, both monumental and small in scale, that have accumulated centuries of history, but have never ceased to be icons of the city and, even, icons of humanity. The legacy that shapes Barcelona today isn't made up of cold, lifeless stones. Instead, every wall, doorway, tower, courtyard and facade conceals thousands of stories and anecdotes that are keen to be discovered by visitors. The fact is that it doesn't matter if we view the Barcelona skyline from the sea, when we are nearing the harbour; or the air, from one of the many planes that land every day at the airport; or from *terra firma*, where the traces of the footsteps we leave behind bear witness to the fact that we are the protagonists of our present. It doesn't matter how we look at the city, because from every angle we can discern the wonderful contrast between the most avant-garde buildings and ancient bell towers, the gargles and the wealth of Romanesque, Gothic and baroque architecture that has been present here on the shores of the Mediterranean for many centuries.

This explains why the Catalan capital is made up of myriad pieces of art that are dotted around its neighbourhoods, streets and squares, like the pieces of a jigsaw. When they are put together, they give Barcelona its own personality that lends it a universal appeal. And it is at this point where the religious art we can see in the street (the churches, cloisters, monasteries and basilicas) allows us to pick up on the marvellous communion between the city and its surroundings; between the local residents and their heritage. The finest example is arguably the **Sagrada Família**, which was consecrated by Pope Benedict XVI under the world's gaze. Gaudí's masterpiece isn't just a symbol of the Catalan capital that breaks down boundaries, but the clearest example of its cosmopolitanism that has been projected around the world through its architectural legacy and its creative and artistic beauty. In point of fact, it is the wealth of religious architecture spread throughout the city that provides us with in-depth knowledge of the ancient Roman colony of Barcino, the medieval city, and the most modern Barcelona.

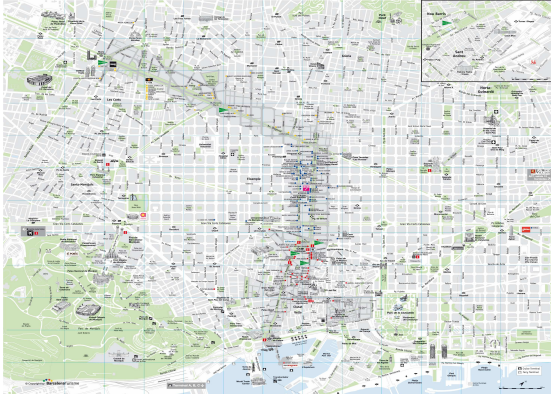
Today, a visit to the heart of Barcelona – its Gothic Quarter – means coming into contact with its key landmarks, such as the **cathedral** and the church of **Santa Maria del Mar**, which is so fascinating that it has captivated many writers and inspired worldwide best-selling novels. As you follow the ancient city walls, you'll discover

architectural gems such as **Santa Maria del Pi**, another example of an original Romanesque church that went on to become a Gothic cathedral in miniature. The fact that it stands close to La Rambla means it has a life and personality of its own. You'll come across the church of **Sant Jaume**, which is also in the city centre and hosts regular classical and Spanish guitar concerts, and the baroque **Sant Felip Neri**, with its paintings by Joan Llimona. Romanesque, Gothic and neo-Gothic also come together in the square and church of **Sant Just i Pastor**, in one of the most peaceful and, at the same time, most unforgettable parts of the city. Tucked away in another corner of the city, **Sant Pere de Puelles**, which dates from 945 AD, comes into view, full of mystery, along with the Romanesque church of **Sant Pau del Camp**, one of the city's most unusual architectural gems. And close to the sea, **La Mercè** invites us to remember the titles won by Barça.

However, Barcelona is much more than the old town, Ciutat Vella. Among the characteristic grid of streets in the Eixample rises up the church of **La Concepció**, where Gothic architecture manages to stand out among the *modernista* landmarks. Perched on top of the mountain, stands the imposing church of the **Sagrat Cor del Tibidabo**, which is reminiscent of Montmartre in Paris. And following in the footsteps of modernity, very near the future high-speed-train terminal of La Sagrera, stands **Sant Andreu del Palomar**, with its splendid mosaic by Gaudí. Once again, Barcelona shows its most peaceful side as we walk through its cloisters, such as those at **Pedralbes Monastery** and the cathedral, or when we view the priceless collections of Romanesque and Gothic art (currently being reorganised) at the **MNAC**, and the **Museu Diocesà**. And, on the horizon, very close to the capital, the **Güell Crypt** designed by Gaudí, mysterious **Montserrat**, the stunning **Monastery of Sant Cugat del Vallès** and the **monumental ensemble in Terrassa** await the visitor. So, from church to church and from museum to museum, Barcelona's treasures are coming to light.

21. An entire city for shopping

With its varied and distinct retail offering, Barcelona provides a wonderful opportunity for shopping in autumn and for Christmas.



Just imagine you were given the opportunity to stroll among World Heritage landmarks, explore medieval streets that are steeped in history, and admire futuristic modern buildings while you stop off at an artisan's workshop, drop by an artist's studio, enjoy gourmet specialities, go into the most exclusive fashion boutiques or while away the time among the stalls of a bustling market.

Well, you don't have to imagine it; you can make it come true, because Barcelona is one of the few cities in the world that provides a vast retail offering to suit all tastes and pockets right by its main tourist attractions. And during the autumn and winter season the city looks even more spectacular as its streets are decked out with Christmas lights and decorations.

If you want to explore every aspect of the most modern Barcelona, which is also proudest of its traditions, take a map of the city and mark a point on La Rambla, the bustling central thoroughfare. This is the perfect place to start an itinerary combining culture and shopping, either on foot, using public transport or the Barcelona Bus Turístic, which also stops in the city's main shopping areas. On one side of this central boulevard, you'll find the attractive retail offering of the Portal de l'Àngel, one of the most exclusive shopping streets which also offers very competitive prices. It is lined with shops, shopping arcades and department stores selling leading brands from Spain and abroad, particularly clothes, footwear and accessories. A maze of narrow streets comes off the Portal de l'Àngel. Steeped in history, they have attractive cafés, particularly on Carrer Petritxol, and centuries-old shops. All along the way, tourist attractions, including the church of El Pi, the cathedral and the Catalan government headquarters, the Palau de la Generalitat and the Jewish Quarter, accompany shoppers. If you explore this side of La Rambla even further, you'll come to the medieval district, the Born, which is crammed with palazzos and attractive museums, including the Museu Picasso, and showcases a matchless array of designer shops which complement the traditional and distinctive shops around the Santa Caterina Market (an architectural wonder and the perfect place to enjoy local cuisine). If you head back to La Rambla and cross over to the other side, you'll find the up-and-coming neighbourhood of the Raval with its bustling street life and blend of multicultural shops, which have the Boqueria Market as their epicentre. The market is a real magnet for tourists and a gastronomic treasure trove featuring produce sourced locally and from around the world. The MACBA and the CCCB, two of the Catalan capital's cutting-edge museums, are the second pole of attraction. Around them, you'll find a wide range of highly

individual designer shops. Another of the city's main shopping streets, the Carrer Pelai, is easy to get to from here. It begins on the corner opposite the university buildings and is lined with top-range retail establishments selling leading brands. It ends in the Plaça de Catalunya where the Turisme de Barcelona information office (www.barcelonaturisme.cat) offers a convenient VAT refund service for tourists from outside the EU.

This central plaza separates the old and more modern city, which begins with the famous Eixample district: a network of wide streets and *modernista* buildings which delight visitors. The world's most glamorous boutiques, on the ground floors of Barcelona's most majestic buildings, line the Passeig de Gràcia. This boulevard is home to La Pedrera and other important landmarks by Gaudí and other *modernista* architects, some of them Unesco World Heritage Sites. Running parallel to the Passeig de Gràcia is the Rambla de Catalunya, another retail hub for shoppers in search of a high-end retail experience. The Rambla features a wider variety of brands and focuses more on products from Catalonia and the rest of Spain. It is one of the best places to find the new arrivals on the market. Throughout the area, clothes and footwear are the main attraction along with accessories and homeware. At the top of the Passeig de Gràcia and Rambla de Catalunya you'll find the Diagonal, one of Barcelona's main avenues, which is another important retail showcase featuring shops from Spain and around the world. It connects the area around Plaça Francesc Macià and the Turó Park to the business district of Maria Cristina, close to the Futbol Club Barcelona stadium.

Barcelona has a wide variety of shopping areas. These are grouped together by neighbourhoods, each one with its own unique personality that ties in with its own retail tradition, is perfectly in tune with its surroundings and attests to the city's broad appeal and large number of attractions. This route, from the bottom of La Rambla to the Diagonal, is part of the Barcelona Shopping Line (www.barcelonashoppingline.com), a 5-kilometre network that connects all the city centre's shopping streets. It isn't a shopping area with no life of its own; quite the contrary in fact. It organises activities throughout the year and awards prizes to the best shop window displays. During the Christmas season, this area of Barcelona shines both day and night. On 1st December, the Passeig de Gràcia hosts Shopping Night Barcelona, a great opportunity to visit its shops by moonlight. The fact is, the Catalan capital is the best shop for everyone: for all pockets, for all tastes and even, for night owls.

22. Corners of Gràcia



Barcelona is a city made up of 73 neighbourhoods, each one with a life of its own and two characteristic traits in common: tradition and modernity. Despite its cosmopolitan calling, the Catalan capital retains many treasures of its past. Among the most highly prized are the former villages that were annexed into the city, particularly with the creation of the famous Eixample district, one of the most widely admired town-planning projects in the world. This process led to the expansion of Barcelona and made it one of the world's most forward-looking cities which still retains the essential qualities of its neighbourhoods with their own distinct personalities. This is the case with Gràcia, which was a separate village until the late 19th century but was absorbed by the city. It still retains its low-rise houses and rich and varied cultural and artistic life, as well as its open and welcoming character. Gràcia has a plethora of hidden nooks and crannies as well as memories and dreams which have become reality thanks to the close relationship between its local residents and tradespeople. Gràcia isn't just an exciting hub for artists, with a wide range of galleries; it is also a hotspot for Barcelona's rich and varied gastronomy, as well as a focus for theatre and cinema. Above all, it is the custodian of the most popular traditions.

If you want to feel the city's most human pulse in all its splendour, take a stroll through the different areas of Gràcia which will take you on a journey to the very heart of the Catalan capital. From one end of the neighbourhood to the other, *modernisme* is omnipresent, often bearing the imposing hallmark of Antoni Gaudí: from the top of the elegant Passeig de Gràcia, where we find the sumptuous Casa Fuster, to the splendid Casa Vicens, with its oriental flavour, via the Llibertat Market and the Park Güell on the north side of the neighbourhood. The Rambla del Prat is the main *modernista* avenue with its important residential buildings and a whole host of details waiting to be discovered, such as the sculpted masks by Pau Gargallo on the façade of the old Teatre Bosc, which depict the great geniuses of Catalan culture, such as Picasso and Nonell. Gràcia is home to large buildings steeped in history and discerning artistic taste, which are important not just in their own right but because they are still central to community life. All the narrow streets and squares in this part of the city have a history behind them and the promise of a future ahead of them. Another example is the Albaceria Central Market, which occupies an extraordinary site from where you can soak up the true atmosphere of the neighbourhood.

The Plaça del Diamant epitomises the spirit of the people of Gràcia. Mercè Rodoreda's novel, which is one of the most popular in Catalan literature, was named after this square. The locals have kept one of Spain's most inventive and creative festivals alive throughout the years. Every August, they vie with one another to create

the most spectacular street decorations. In reality, Gràcia is an assortment of squares, such as the Plaça de la Vila de Gràcia, with its splendid clock tower decorated with signs of the zodiac; the Plaça del Sol, packed with bars and cafès, and the Plaça de la de la Revolució, which leads to the Carrer Verdi, one of the city's most traditional streets which is packed with bars, restaurants and shops and is home to two of its best-known arthouse cinemas. It abuts on to the central Plaça de la Virreina and is flanked by the church of Sant Joan and former worker's cottages. However, one thing that really sets Gràcia apart is its busy street life, both day and night. The range of bars and restaurants, some of them of great renown, such as Botafumeiro and La Torreta de Gràcia, offers every kind of cuisine imaginable from the four corners of the world, although Catalan cuisine takes pride of place. Meanwhile, visitors will encounter art galleries and boutiques selling clothes and designer accessories as they explore the neighbourhood, inviting them to step inside and enjoy every corner of Gràcia, as if it were an open-air museum with an irrepressible life.