



AllWays Traveller

Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

## Sun, sea and a passionate city of stunning style

**Barcelona, in eastern Spain is the capital of Catalonia and one of the world's great cities.**

It is a modern, vibrant and sophisticated city surrounded by sloping hills and a Mediterranean coastline.

Catalan pride and passion reached a peak with Barcelona hosting the 1992 Summer Olympics and the citywide investment these Games generated has established a truly world class destination.

Given all its attributes it is not surprising that Barcelona is the fourth most popular European destination (after Paris, London, and Rome) and has devotees worldwide.

For the visitor, Barcelona has just about everything one could want from a year-round, city break destination.

It a thriving, throbbing, modern city with a swathe of stunning art deco architecture sitting alongside a medieval old town which, in turn leads through the marina to the beach.

The city also offers world class arts, culture and entertainment and has tree lined boulevards and parakeet nesting parks and gardens.

### Ashley Gibbins

Managing Editor  
AllWays traveller

### Within easy reach of Barcelona

To this add Barcelona's fine beaches, which are located via an easy stroll through the marina. Beyond Barcelona itself, southern France, the Pyrenees and the northern Costa Brava are within easy reach.



[www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com)



# Barcelona's Catalan roots go deep

by Ashley Gibbins

**Barcelona is not a Spanish city but the capital of Catalonia, a region of Spain.**



That Barcelona citizens should feel a loyalty to Catalanian first and Spain second is not surprising given the regions relatively recent history.

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) the Catalans had supported the Republic, against General Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces.

With the defeat of the Republic, Franco, as self-imposed dictator of Spain, suppressed all public association with Catalan nationalism.

The use of the Catalan language was banned in government-run institutions, the media and during public events.

Catalan schools could not teach their native tongue and Catalonians were left in no doubt as to Franco's disregard for them.

After the death of the dictator, in 1975, Spain adopted a democratic system of government and reintroduced a royal head of state.

### The city prospers



Catalonia, in turn, prospered being granted political autonomy and enjoying re-emergence of a flourishing cultural identity.

Barcelona was officially recognised as the Catalan Capital.

In the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and now into the 21<sup>st</sup>, Barcelona has become an international city and a major tourist destination.

The granting of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games brought with it the investment needed for a citywide regeneration with the event itself putting the city into the global spotlight.

Barcelona has not looked back.

### Get a Barcelona city card

The Barcelona city card gives free travel on public transport, discounts and free offers at museums, cultural venues, leisure facilities, night-clubs, shops, restaurants and entertainment venues.

The card is available at tourist information centres in the city or online from the official tourist website.

[www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com)

### Eat and drink at the bar



In the tourist hotspots a stool at the bar has more atmosphere than sitting outside (you will get enough of the sun) and is often 15% cheaper.

### Stroll around

To get the best of Barcelona , stroll it.



While the manic pace of the main thoroughfares can soon drain the energy, head off into the side streets and you will discover a serenity amid these majestic buildings.

And one is never far from a pavement café or bar to sit and watch the world go by.

## So much to take in

Barcelona offers the visitor so much to take in and a strategic approach to a first visit is highly recommended.

Luckily, most of Barcelona's visitor 'lure' is within a relatively small area, and this makes touring on foot or by the city's excellent public transport network by far the best way to get around.

## Getting one's bearings

A good way to start a visit to Barcelona is by purchasing a two-day pass for one of the open top tours.



### Barcelona Bus Turistic

We opted for the Barcelona Bus Turistic and it was an ideal way to discover Barcelona's most interesting and attractive sights.

The hop-on-hop-off service combines three routes and 44 tour stops.

This allowed us to take a complete two-and-a-half hour guided tour, which put Barcelona in perspective, and enabled the formulation of a 'wish-list' of what to do and see and, perhaps equally important, in what order.

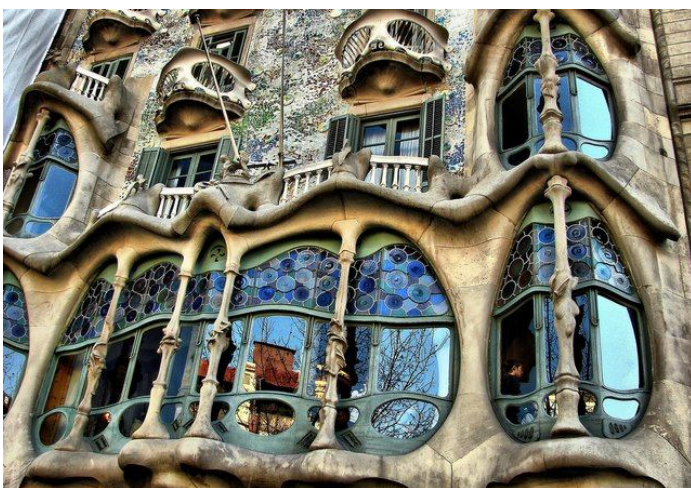
From then on the pass acted as an excellent transport service to all major tourist areas of the city.

The third day onwards we changed to the city's metro when necessary.

[www.barcelonabusturistic.cat](http://www.barcelonabusturistic.cat)

Barcelona City Tours is the other bus tour company :  
[www.barcelonacitytour.cat](http://www.barcelonacitytour.cat)

## To Marvel at Gaudí is a must



First time visitors to Barcelona will be stunned by the Catalan Modernism architecture of Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926).

Gaudí is undoubtedly Barcelona's favourite son and the large legacy of his work that remains shows why this status is so well deserved.

## Go to the beach



The frantic sometime manic pace of life on a city break can sometimes get a bit much.

This is not a problem in Barcelona, with its Mediterranean coastline. Take a stroll to the beach.

Barcelona has 4.5km of beach front with the most popular tending to be Barceloneta beach with its proximity to the city centre.

It is an easy and very attractive stroll from the Gothic Quarter through the marina.

The beach is a great place to start the day with a coffee, to break up the city sightseeing with a lunch or to unwind with a sundowner.

For sand and sea lovers there is the chance to stay there all day.

### Walk Las Ramblas - with care

The famous, some would say infamous, Las Ramblas starts at Plaza Catalunya and ends at the Monument of Columbus and the harbour.

This boulevard was laid out in 1766 and has been a magnet for visitors to the city ever since.

Today, you will find it packed with tourists and those looking to make money off them in almost equal measure.

Flower sellers, food stalls and portrait artists, compete with buskers, human statues and trinket traders all looking to entice the tourists Euro.

And, unfortunately, there are those who see the opportunity to pick a pocket – particularly in the late evening.

The bars and cafes along Las Ramblas provide the opportunity to relax and watch the tourist procession.

But for a more exciting experience step off Las Ramblas into the Mercat de la Boqueria.

## Three of Gaudí's best

Three wonderful examples of his work, and three of the most popular tourist attractions, are the Casa Batlló, the Sagrada Família and La Pedrera.



### Casa Batlló

Casa Batlló, on Passeig de Gràcia, is a truly striking example of Art Nouveau architecture - inside and out.

The local name for the building is *Casa del ossos* or House of Bones, because of its skeletal quality.

Originally designed for a wealthy middle-class family on Barcelona's most fashionable thoroughfare, it is now open to the public with proceeds use for the ongoing restoration.

[www.casabatllo.cat](http://www.casabatllo.cat)



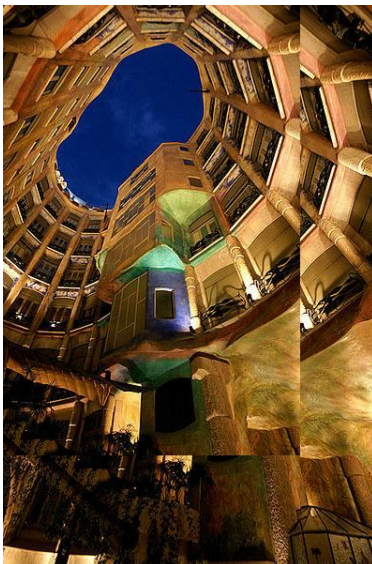
### The Sagrada Família

Gaudí's best known work is the immense, and magnificent, but still unfinished church of the Sagrada Família.

Gaudí first started on the design and initial construction of the church in 1882, aged 31, and devoted the rest of his life to the work.

Work to complete his project, some thirty years away, is financed, as it always has been, by private donations.

[www.sagradafamilia.cat](http://www.sagradafamilia.cat)



### La Pedrera

La Pedrera, another in the Gaudí portfolio, is the second most visited Barcelona museum after the Sagrada Família.

It also houses renaissance drawings and a collection of modern art paintings.

[www.lapedreraeducacio.org](http://www.lapedreraeducacio.org)

In addition to these three there are other Gaudí buildings scattered throughout Barcelona with information and guided tours available from the tourist centres.

### The Mercat de la Boqueria



The Mercat de Sant Josep de la Boqueria, often simply referred to as La Boqueria is a large indoor public market that has been operating on the site since 1217.

With its warren of stalls selling meat, fish, fruit and vegetables it is an explosion of colour and as much a tourist attraction as a produce market.

This is also the place to jostle with the locals for lunch.

### The Palau Nacional

The Palau Nacional at the end of Avinguda de la Reina Maria Cristina, was built for the 1929 World's Fair and renovated for the Olympics.

It now houses the National Art Museum of Catalonia which includes a gallery featuring work by Picasso.

Font Màgica, the fountains in front of the Museum, sees the water jets synchronized to classical music during summer evenings.

### Poble Espanyol

Designed by the Catalan Architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch, the Poble Espanyol de Barcelona, was also built for the 1929 Exhibition.

This open-air, themed village of replica Spanish streets, squares and buildings is scattered with restaurants and shops.

[www.poble-espanyol.com](http://www.poble-espanyol.com)

### The Barri Gòtic

The Barri Gòtic or Gothic Quarter, the heart of the old city and Jewish quarter, takes visitors through a cobblestone maze of centuries old churches and grand renaissance buildings.

In the Plaça Nova is Barcelona Cathedral with its Gothic cloister.

There are a number of museums and a string of restaurants, bars and cafes.

## A place to stay

The Núñez i Navarro group of hotels offers visitors a choice of nine places to stay in locations throughout Barcelona.

Each has its own character although all offer excellent quality and standard of service. Prices range according to star rating (three to five) and location.

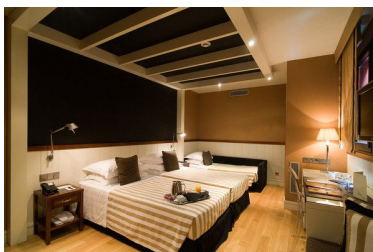
### The U232 Hotel



The U232 Hotel in Comte d'Urgell is an elegant and stylish hotel suited for business and pleasure travellers.

It is located next to the Comte d'Urgell metro station and is within walking distance of all the city's visitor attractions.

[www.u232hotel.com](http://www.u232hotel.com)



Other hotels in the group include :



### Hotel 1898

Hotel 1898 (left) is a five star hotel in Las Ramblas in what was once the Philippine Tobacco Company.

[www.hotel1898.com](http://www.hotel1898.com)

### B-Hotel Barcelona



The B-Hotel Barcelona is a three-star boutique hotel located in the very heart of the city overlooking the Plaza Espanya.

[www.b-hotel.com](http://www.b-hotel.com)



Hotel Jazz : [www.hoteljazz.com](http://www.hoteljazz.com)

Hotel Soho Barcelona : [www.hotelsohobarcelona.com](http://www.hotelsohobarcelona.com)

Hotel Barcelona Universal : [www.hotelbarcelonauniversal.com](http://www.hotelbarcelonauniversal.com)

Hotel Europark : [www.hoteleuropark.com](http://www.hoteleuropark.com)

[www.nnhotels.com](http://www.nnhotels.com)

### Be safe feel safe

Barcelona has a reputation as the destination for 'pickpockets' and with some justification.

However, visitors to any destination need to be aware of unscrupulous individuals.

All that is needed is extra vigilance, particularly on public transport and at the main tourist areas – particularly along Las Ramblas.

Leave valuables, including passports, in the hotel safe, use bags that can be zipped up (and worn in front of you), and hold cameras in a way that can not be snatched.

### More information on Barcelona



### The one guide to get

The Barcelona the 'city, map by map practical guide' free from Barcelona Turisme is full of information, maps and photographs and all you will need.

### Tourist information

Located in the city centre at Plaça de Catalunya, the tourist information centre has all the information you will need from multi-lingual staff speaking.

The centre also provides hotel information and bookings at over 300 hotels in the city and the chance to buy the Barcelona card, travel tickets, guided tours and tourist publications.

Other clearly signed information points are located throughout the city.

[www.barcelonaturisme.com](http://www.barcelonaturisme.com)  
[info@barcelonaturisme.com](mailto:info@barcelonaturisme.com)

## AllWays more Barcelona

### When to go to Barcelona



Being a Mediterranean city, Barcelona can be enjoyed year round. That said, the high summer months can be very hot and the beaches very crowded.

Spring and Autumn are ideal times to visit, especially between May and June and September and October. Winter in Barcelona can be chilly but is still likely to be sunny.

### How to get there

#### By air

Barcelona El Prat airport, which is the city's principal airport, enjoys excellent transport connections to the city centre.

A train leaves the airport for Barcelona every 20 minutes and takes 30 minutes to reach the city centre (Plaça de Catalunya) and a bus service runs at regular intervals.

The official yellow and black taxis are also readily available.

#### By rail

Barcelona is also a major hub for RENFE, the Spanish state railway network and enjoys high-speed rail links with major Spanish cities.

### How to get around

#### On foot

Walking Barcelona is the best way to embrace the city and to get caught up in its sights, sounds, culture and passion.

#### The Metro

The metro network connects the centre of Barcelona to each one of the city's neighbourhoods, as well as providing access to nearby cities.

### Two wheels



Barcelona also has its *Bicing*, the credit card accessed, bike hire service, with 100 docking stations throughout the city.

#### The trams

Barcelona has two modern tram networks, known as Trambaix and Trambesòs and an historic tram line, the Tramvia Blau, which connects the metro to the Funicular del Tibidabo.

#### The mountain railways

The Funicular de Tibidabo and the Funicular de Vallvidrera takes you up and down Tibidabo hill and the Funicular de Montjuïc climbs the Montjuïc Hill.

#### By cable car

The city also has two aerial cable cars taking visitors to the Montjuïc castle.

#### By bus

Barcelona's thousand strong bus fleet will get you to all parts of the city each of the many stops explaining which lines stop there and real time information on bus arrivals.

#### Taxis

Barcelona has a 10,000 car licenced, metered, taxi fleet.

### What to eat

Being one of the world's great cities, Barcelona has restaurants serving the full range of international cuisine in all its tourist hot spots.



However, head beyond these and you can find the side street tapas bars where the prices are lower and the character more authentic.

This is where the Catalans eat - and eat late into the evening and where the local wines are remarkably good and very reasonably priced.



### What to speak

Catalonia and Spanish of course, and English is understood in most of the hotels.

However this may not always be the case when one ventures beyond.

Whatever, it is always good to speak a few basic phrases.

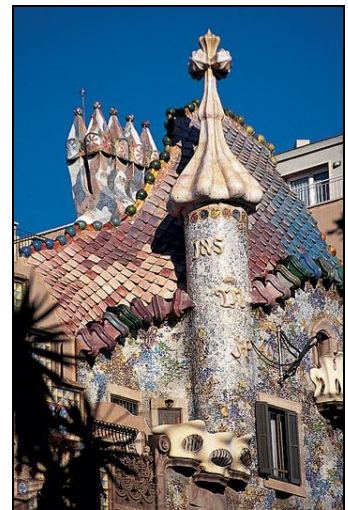
Google 'simple tourist phrases in Catalan' and take your pick.

### Money matters

IVA, a value added tax, is 7% on accommodation and restaurant prices and is not always shown in the listed prices. On retail goods the IVA is 16%.

A tip is not automatically included and 10% where warranted is customary.

## A snapshot of Barcelona



## The International Travel Writers Alliance



AllWays

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with an equally independent view of the world from the travel journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.



The International Travel Writers Alliance

[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the worlds largest association of professional travel writers, editors, broadcasters and photographers.

## Ashley Gibbins



Ashley, a third generation journalist, is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance.