

Local

Barcelona, Spain(1)

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia and the second largest city in Spain, has a population of 1,621,537 on a land area of 101.4 km². It is one of Europe's largest metropolises on the Mediterranean coast. With its own language, character and history Barcelona has become a major economic centre, hosting one of Europe's principle ports and with a heavy concentration of hi-tech and biomedical business. Its location, facilities, and cultural heritage make it a popular choice for hosting conferences, exhibitions and sporting events. Today it counts as a major tourist destination and according to Euromonitor International, Barcelona is the 16th-most-visited city in the world and 4th most visited in Europe after Paris, London and Rome, with several million tourists every year.

Barcelona has plenty to offer, both on a seasonal basis and throughout the year. Among the most popular of the tourist highlights are the world-renowned architectural works of Antoni Gaudí; such as the Casa Batlló, La Pedrera, La Sagrada Familia or the Park Güell. Another pleasant activity is taking one of the Barcelona walking tours, for example in the Gothic quarter. This ancient center constitutes one of the greatest concentrations of Gothic architecture in Europe. Here guides will take you along the Roman and Medieval routes. The Gourmet tours, including a visit to the Boqueria and Santa Catherina food markets, are also becoming more known, due to Catalonia being home to several avant-garde chefs. For art lovers there are plenty of Museums to peruse such as the Picasso Museum, The Joan Miró and Antonio Tapies Foundations, or the Modern Art Museum, among many others. For breathtaking views of the cityscape, the Montjuïc castle and Tibidabo offer panoramic views of Barcelona where one can appreciate its extensive spread, architectural variety and surroundings.

In the mid-19th century, Barcelona expanded considerably following the ideas of the town planner Idelfons Cerdà, and several towns that were located on the outskirts of Barcelona made a smooth transition to become part of the city. With the World Fair of 1888 and the International Exhibition in 1929, Barcelona saw the construction of some of its most emblematic buildings. Later, to celebrate the Summer Olympics in 1992, a huge and highly-significant cutting-edge project was carried out to remodel its infrastructure and build new facilities. Recently, thanks to the 2004 Forum of Cultures and to other large-scale projects currently in progress, the city is continually improving its accessibility, transport and communication infrastructures, as well as preparing new facilities for economic activities. Barcelona has done an outstanding job in recent times remodeling its seafront, introducing bike-lanes and carrying out many environmental improvements.

The city hosts a comprehensive public transportation network, as well as a touristic bus that offers easy access to a variety of cultural routes. Other options to travel around the city include renting a scooter or a bike for the day or, of course, walking. Once sightseeing has the feet aching one can relax at the Barceloneta beach, sit on a bench at the Ciutadella Park or join the Barça fans for a football match at the Camp Nou stadium. Numerous bars and restaurants can be found in practically every part of town. Asking locals for recommendations will undoubtedly uncover the most authentic and best quality meals. Whatever one's taste, Barcelona will surely have something on its menu for you!

For more information you can visit: www.barcelonaturisme.com

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- 1) Barcelona Skyline, Castell dels tres Dragons, Port of Barcelona, Sagrada Familia, Camp Nou, Mar Bella Beach,
- 2) Roy Lichtenstein's "The head",
- 3) Monastery of Pedralbes,
- 4) Santa Caterina Market,
- 5) Gorg Kolbe Statue (Mies van der Rohe Pavillion)