# BACKGROUND

## HISTORY

### SIGNS FROM THE DISTANT PAST

The area around present-day Barcelona was certainly inhabited prior to the arrival of the Romans in Catalonia in 218 BC. By whom, and whether or not there was an urban nucleus, is open to debate.

Pre-Roman coins found in the area suggest the Iberian Laietani tribe may have settled here. As far back as 35,000 BC, the tribe's Stone Age predecessors had roamed the Pyrenees and begun to descend into the lowlands to the south. In 1991 the remains of 25 corpses were found in Carrer de Sant Pau in El Raval – they had been buried around 4000 BC. It has been speculated that, in those days, much of El Raval was a bay and that the hillock (Mont Tàber) next to Plaça de Sant Jaume may have been home to a Neolithic settlement.

Other evidence hints at a settlement established around 230 BC by the Carthaginian conqueror (and father of Hannibal), Hamilcar Barca. It is tempting to see in his name the roots of the city's own name. Some archaeologists believe that any pre-Roman town must have been built on the hill of Montjuïc.

### ROMANS, VISIGOTHS & ISLAM

The heart of the Roman settlement of Barcino (much later Barcelona) lay within what would later become the medieval city – now known as the Barri Gòtic. The temple was raised on Mont Tàber. Remains of city walls, temple pillars and graves all attest to what would eventually become a busy and lively town. Barcino was not a major centre, however. Tarraco (Tarragona) to the southwest and the one-time Greek trading centre of Emporion (Empúries) to the north were more important. The Latin poet Ausonius, however, paints a picture of contented prosperity – Barcino (founded in the reign of Caesar Augustus) lived well off the agricultural produce in its hinterland and from fishing. Oysters, in particular, appeared regularly on the Roman menu in ancient times. Wine, olive oil and *garum* (a rather tart fish paste and favourite staple of the Romans) were all produced and consumed in abundance.

As the Roman Empire wobbled, Hispania (as the Iberian Peninsula was known to the Romans) felt the effects. It is no coincidence that the bulk of Barcelona's Roman walls, vestiges of which remain today, went up in the 4th century AD. Marauding Franks had visited a little death and destruction on the city in a prelude to what was to come – several waves of invaders flooded across the country like great Atlantic rollers. By 415 the comparatively Romanised Visigoths had arrived and, under their leader Athaulf (a narrow lane in the Barri Gòtic is named after him), made a temporary capital in Barcino before moving on to Toletum (Toledo) in the 6th century. In the wake of their departure, the town and surrounding territory was left largely lawless. As various epidemics struck, local revolts against weak Visigothic rule were frequent.

In 711 the Muslim general Tariq landed an expeditionary force at present-day Gibraltar (Arabic for Tariq's Mountain). He had no trouble sweeping across the peninsula all the way

**c 4000 BC**

Jasper implements discovered around Carrer del Paradís indicate that a Neolithic settlement may have thrived around the present-day Plaça de Sant Jaume at this time.

**218 BC**

In a move to block supplies to the Carthaginian general Hannibal, waging war against Rome in Italy itself, Roman troops under Scipio land at Empúries, found Tarraco (Tarragona) and take control of the Catalan coast.

**15 BC**

Caesar Augustus grants the town of Barcino, possibly established under his auspices, the rather long-winded title of Colonia Julia Augusta Faventia Paterna Barcino.

into France, where he and his army were only brought to a halt in 732 by the Franks at Poitiers.

Barcelona fell under Muslim sway but they seem not to have been overly impressed with their prize. The town is mentioned in Arabic chronicles but it seems the Muslims resigned themselves early on to setting up a defensive line along the Riu Ebro to the south. Louis the Pious, the future Frankish ruler, retook Barcelona from them in 801.

The *comtes* (counts) installed here as Louis' lieutenants hailed from local tribes roaming on the periphery of the Frankish empire. Barcelona was a frontier town in what was known as the Frankish or Spanish March – a rough-and-ready buffer zone south of the Pyrenees.

## A HAIRY BEGINNING

The plains and mountains to the northwest and north of Barcelona were populated by the people who by then could be identified as 'Catalans' (although surviving documentary references to the term only date from the 12th century). Catalan, the language of these people, was closely related to the *langue d'oc,* the post-Latin lingua franca of southern France (of which Provençal is about the only barely surviving reminder).

The March was under nominal Frankish control but the real power lay with local potentates (themselves often of Frankish origin, however) who ranged across the territory. One of these rulers went by the curious name of Guifré el Pelós, or Wilfred the Hairy. This was not a reference to uneven shaving habits: according to legend, old Guifré had hair in parts most people do not (exactly which parts was never specified!). He and his brothers gained control of most of the Catalan counties by 878 and Guifré entered the folk mythology of Catalonia. If Catalonia can be called a nation, then its 'father' was the hirsute Guifré.

Guifré and his immediate successors continued, at least in name, to be vassals of the Franks. In reality, his position as 'Comte de Barcelona' (Count of Barcelona; even today many refer to Barcelona as the *ciutat comtal,* or city of counts) was assured in his own right.

## top picks

### BOOKS ON THE HISTORY OF BARCELONA

- **Barcelona** (Robert Hughes; 1992) A witty and passionate study of the art and architecture of the city through history. It is neither flouncing artistic criticism nor dry history, rather a distillation of the life of the city and people and an assessment of its expression. He followed up with the briefer, more personal *Barcelona the Great Enchantress* in 2004.
- **Barcelona – A Thousand Years of the City's Past** (Felipe Fernández-Armesto; 1991) A fascinating history of the city from medieval days to the 20th century, organised not in chronological order but rather by themes such as Barcelona and the Sea and Barcelona and Europe.
- **Homage to Barcelona** (Colm Tóibín; 1990) An excellent personal introduction to the city's pre-Olympic life and artistic and political history by an Irish writer who lived there.
- **Homage to Catalonia** (George Orwell; 1938) Orwell's classic account of the first half of the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War as he lived it in Barcelona and on the front line in Catalonia, moving from the euphoria of the early days in Barcelona to disillusionment with the disastrous infighting on the Republican side.
- **Historia de Barcelona** (María Pomés & Alicia Sánchez; 2001) Spanish readers will appreciate this straightforward, chronological account of the city, which presents plenty of curious social history alongside the usual political events.

## THE COMTES DE BARCELONA

By the late 10th century, the Casal de Barcelona (House of Barcelona) was the senior of several counties (whose leaders were all related by family ties) that would soon be a single, independent principality covering most of modern Catalonia except the south, plus Roussillon (today in France).

This was the only Iberian Christian 'state' not to fall under the sway of Sancho III of Navarra in the early 11th century. The failure of the Franks to come to Barcelona's aid when it was plundered by the Muslims under Al-Mansur in 985 led the counts to reject Frankish suzerainty. So a new entity – Catalonia – acquired tacit recognition across Europe.

Count Ramon Berenguer I was able to buy the counties of Carcassonne and Béziers, north of Roussillon, and Barcelona would maintain ambitions in France for two more centuries – at one point it held territory as far east as Provence. Under Ramon Berenguer III (1082–1131), sea trade developed and Catalonia launched its own fleet.

A system of feudal government and law evolved that had little to do with the more centralised and absolutist models that would emerge in subsequent centuries in Castilla, reconquered from the Muslims. A hotchpotch of Roman-Visigothic laws combined with emerging feudal practice found its way into the written bill of rights called the 'Usatges de Barcelona' from around 1060.

Justice in those days was a little rough by modern standards: '…let them (the rulers) render justice as it seems fit to them: by cutting off hands and feet, putting out eyes, keeping men in prison for a long time and, ultimately, in hanging their bodies if necessary.' Was there an element of misogyny in the Usatges? 'In regard to women, let the rulers render justice by cutting off their noses, lips, ears and breasts, and by burning them at the stake if necessary…'

## MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE?

In 1137 Ramon Berenguer IV clinched what must have seemed an unbeatable deal. He was betrothed to Petronilla, the one-year-old heiress to the throne of Catalonia's western neighbour Aragón, thus creating a joint state that set the scene for Catalonia's golden age.

This state, known as the Corona de Aragón (Crown of Aragon), was ruled by *comtes-reis* (count-kings, ie counts of Barcelona and kings of Aragón). The title enshrined the continued separateness of the two states, and both retained many of their own laws. The arrangement was to have unexpected consequences as it tied Catalonia to the destiny of the rest of the peninsula in a way that ultimately would not appeal to many Catalans. In the meantime, however, the combined state had the critical mass needed for expansion. Curiously, while the bulk of the following centuries' conquests and trade would be carried out by the Catalans from Barcelona, the name Catalonia would be largely subsumed into that of Aragón. After all, the counts of Barcelona were from hereon the kings of Aragón. Strictly speaking, there never was a Catalan kingdom.

## MEDITERRANEAN EMPIRE

Not content to leave all the glory of the Reconquista to the Castilians, Jaume I (r 1213–76) set about his own spectacular missions. At only 21 years of age, he set off in 1229 with fleets

**AD 415**
Visigoths under Athaulf, with captured Roman empress Galla Placidia as his wife, make Barcino their capital. With several interruptions, it remains so until the Visigoths move to Toledo (central Spain) in the 6th century.

**718**
Only seven years after the Muslim invasion of Spain launched from Morocco at Gibraltar, Barcelona falls to Tariq's mostly Arab and Berber troops on their blitzkrieg march north into France.

**801**
After a year-long siege, the son of Charlemagne and future Frankish king Louis the Pious, wrests Barcelona from Muslims and establishes the Spanish March under local counts.

**985**
Al-Mansur (the Victorious) rampages across Catalan territory and devastates Barcelona in a lightning campaign. The city is largely razed and much of its population marched off as slaves to Córdoba.

**1137**
Count Ramon Berenguer IV is betrothed to one-year-old Petronilla, daughter of the king of Aragón, creating a new combined state that would be known as the Corona de Aragón.

**1225–29**
At 18 years old, Jaume I takes command of the realm and four years later he conquers Muslim-held Mallorca, the first of several dazzling conquests that lead him to be called El Conqueridor (the Conqueror).

from Tarragona, Barcelona, Marseilles and other ports. His objective was Mallorca, which he won. Six years later he had Ibiza and Formentera. Things were going so well that, prodded by the Aragonese, for good measure he took control of Valencia (on the mainland) too. This was no easy task and was only completed in 1248 after 16 years of grinding conquest. Still, it would be hard to begrudge the tireless king his sobriquet of El Conqueridor (The Conqueror). All this activity helped fuel a boom in Barcelona and Jaume raised new walls that increased the size of the enclosed city tenfold.

The empire-building shifted into top gear in the 1280s. Jaume I's son Pere II (1240–85) took Sicily in 1282. The easternmost part of the Balearics, Menorca, fell to Alfons II in 1287 after prolonged blood-letting. Most of its people were killed or enslaved and the island remained largely deserted throughout its occupation. Malta, Gozo and Athens were also briefly taken. A half-hearted attempt was made on Corsica but the most determined and ultimately fruitless assault began on Sardinia in 1323. The island became the Corona de Aragón's Vietnam.

In spite of the carnage and the expense of war, this was Barcelona's golden age. It was the base for what was now a thriving mercantile empire and the western Mediterranean was virtually a Catalan lake.

## THE RISE OF PARLIAMENT

The rulers of the Casal de Barcelona and then the *comtes-reis* of the Corona de Aragón had a habit of regularly making themselves absent from Barcelona. Initially, local city administration was in the hands of a viscount, but in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries local power began to shift.

In 1249 Jaume I authorised the election of a committee of key citizens to advise his officials. The idea developed and, by 1274, the Consell dels Cent Jurats (Council of the Hundred Sworn-In) formed an electoral college from which an executive body of five *consellers* (councillors) was nominated to run city affairs.

In 1283 the Corts Catalanes met for the first time. This new legislative council for Catalonia (equivalent bodies sat in Aragón and Valencia) was made up of representatives of the nobility, clergy and high-class merchants to form a counterweight to regal power. The Corts Catalanes met at first annually, then every three years, but had a permanent secretariat known as the Diputació del General or Generalitat. Its home was, and remains, the Palau de la Generalitat.

The Corts and Council increased their leverage as trade grew and their respective roles in raising taxes and distributing wealth became more important. As the *comtes-reis* required money to organise wars and other enterprises, they increasingly relied on impresarios who were best represented through these two oligarchic bodies.

Meanwhile, Barcelona's trading wealth paid for the great Gothic buildings that bejewel the city to this day. La Catedral (p61), the Capella Reial de Santa Àgata (p68) and the churches of Santa Maria del Pi (p70) and Santa Maria del Mar (p83) were all built within the city's boundaries during the late 13th or early 14th centuries. King Pere III (1336–87) later created the breathtaking Reials Drassanes (Royal Shipyards; p78) and also extended the city walls yet again, this time to include the El Raval area to the west.

## DECLINE & CASTILIAN DOMINATION

Preserving the empire began to exhaust Catalonia. Sea wars with Genoa, resistance in Sardinia, the rise of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of the gold trade all drained the city's coffers. Commerce collapsed. The Black Death and famines killed about half of Catalonia's population in the 14th century. Barcelona's Jewish population suffered a pogrom in 1391.

After the last of Guifré el Pelós' dynasty, Martí I, died heirless in 1410, a stacked council elected Fernando (known as Ferran to the Catalans) de Antequera, a Castilian prince of the Trastámara house, to the Aragonese throne. This Compromiso de Caspe (Caspe Agreement) of 1412 was engineered by the Aragonese nobility, which saw it as a chance to reduce Catalan influence.

Another Fernando succeeded to the Aragonese throne in 1479 and his marriage to Isabel, queen of Castilla, united Spain's two most powerful monarchies. Just as Catalonia had been hitched to Aragón, now the combine was hitched to Castilla.

Catalonia effectively became part of the Castilian state, although it jealously guarded its own institutions and system of law. Rather than attack this problem head on, Fernando and Isabel sidestepped it, introducing the hated Spanish Inquisition to Barcelona in 1487 (a local, milder version of the Inquisition had operated on Catalan territory since 1242, with headquarters in the Palau Episcopal – see p67). The local citizenry implored them not to do so as what was left of business life in the city lay largely in the hands of *conversos* (Jews at least nominally converted to Christianity) who were a particular target of Inquisitorial attention. The pleas were ignored and the *conversos* packed their bags and shipped out their money. Barcelona was reduced to penury. Fernando and Isabel's successors, the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V (Carlos I of Spain), and his son, Felipe II, tightened Madrid's grip on Catalonia, although the region long managed to retain a degree of autonomy.

Impoverished and disaffected by ever-growing financial demands from the crown, Catalonia revolted in the 17th century in the Guerra dels Segadors (Reapers' War; 1640–52) and declared itself to be an independent 'republic' under French protection. The countryside and towns were devastated, and Barcelona was finally besieged into submission.

## WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

By the beginning of the 18th century Spain was on the skids. The last of the Habsburgs, Carlos II, died in 1700 with no successor. France imposed a Bourbon, the absolutist Felipe V, but the Catalans preferred the Austrian candidate, Archduke Carlos, and threw in their lot with England, Holland, some German states, Portugal and the House of Savoy to back Austria. In 1702, the War of the Spanish Succession broke out. Catalans thought they were onto a winner. They were wrong and in 1713 the Treaty of Utrecht left Felipe V in charge in Madrid. Abandoned by its allies, Barcelona decided to resist. The siege began in March 1713 and ended on 11 September 1714.

There were no half measures. Felipe V abolished the Generalitat, built a huge fort (the Ciutadella) to watch over Barcelona, and banned writing and teaching in Catalan. What was left of Catalonia's possessions were farmed out to the great powers.

**1283** – The Corts Catalanes, a legislative council for Catalonia, meets for the first time and begins to curtail unlimited powers of sovereigns in favour of the nobles and powerful trading class in the cities.

**1323** – Catalan forces land in Sardinia and launch a campaign of conquest that would only end in 1409. Their most fierce enemy was Eleonora de Arborea, a Sardinian Joan of Arc. Sporadic revolts continue until 1478.

**1348** – An outbreak of plague devastates Barcelona. Two-thirds of the city's population may have died. Further waves of the Black Death, a plague of locusts in 1358 and an earthquake in 1373 deal further blows.

**1670** – Barcelona's first bullfights are held for the Viceroy, the Duke of Osuña, in the Pla del Palau. Fourteen bulls succumb to the toreros in an activity that would become popular in the 19th century.

**1714** – Barcelona loses all autonomy after surrendering to the Bourbon king, Felipe V, on 11 September at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession.

**1770** – A hurricane strikes Barcelona, causing considerable damage. Among other things, the winds destroy more than 200 of the city's 1500 gaslight street lamps.

## A NEW BOOM

After the initial shock, Barcelona found the Bourbon rulers to be comparatively light-handed in their treatment of the city. Indeed, its prosperity and productivity was in Spain's national interest. Throughout the 18th century, the Barcelonins concentrated on what they do best – industry and commerce.

The big break came in 1778, when the ban on trade with the Spanish American colonies was lifted. Since the Conquistadors opened up South America to Spanish trade, Barcelona had been sidelined in a deliberate policy to favour Seville and its satellite ports, deemed as loyal to Madrid. That ban had been formalised after the defeat of 1714. Some enterprising traders had already sent vessels across the Atlantic to deal directly in the Americas – although this was still technically forbidden. Their early ventures were a commercial success and the lifting of the ban stimulated business. In Barcelona itself, growth was modest but sustained. Small-scale manufacturing provided employment and profit. Wages were rising and the city fathers even had a stab at town planning, creating the grid-based workers' district of La Barceloneta.

Before the industrial revolution, based initially on the cotton trade with America, could really get underway, Barcelona and the rest of Spain had to go through a little more pain. A French revolutionary army was launched Spain's way (1793–95) with limited success, but when Napoleon turned his attentions to the country in 1808 it was another story. Barcelona and Catalonia suffered along with the rest of the country until the French were expelled in 1814 (Barcelona was the last city in the hands of the French, who left in September).

By the 1830s, Barcelona was beginning to ride on a feel-good factor that would last for most of the century. Wine, cork and iron industries developed. From the mid-1830s onwards, steamships were launched off the slipways. In 1848 Spain's first railway line was opened between Barcelona and Mataró.

Creeping industrialisation and prosperity for the business class did not work out so well down the line. Working-class families lived in increasingly putrid and cramped conditions. Poor nutrition, bad sanitation and disease were the norm in workers' districts, and riots, predictably, resulted. As a rule they were put down with little ceremony – the 1842 rising was bombarded into submission from the Montjuïc castle. Some relief came in 1854 with the knocking down of the medieval walls but the pressure remained acute.

In 1869 a plan to expand the city was begun. Ildefons Cerdà designed l'Eixample (the Enlargement) as a grid, broken up with gardens and parks and grafted onto the old town, beginning at Plaça de Catalunya. The plan was revolutionary. Until then it had been illegal to build in the plains between Barcelona and Gràcia, the area being a military zone. As industrialisation got underway this building ban also forced the concentration of factories in Barcelona itself (especially in La Barceloneta) and surrounding towns like Gràcia, Sant Martí, Sants and Sant Andreu (all of which were subsequently swallowed up by the burgeoning city).

L'Eixample became (and to some extent remains) the most sought-after chunk of real estate in Barcelona – but the parks were mostly sacrificed to an insatiable demand for housing and undisguised land speculation. The flourishing bourgeoisie paid for lavish, ostentatious buildings, many of them in the unique, Modernista style.

There seemed to be no stopping this town. In 1888 it hosted a Universal Exhibition. Little more than a year before, work on the exhibition buildings and grounds had not even begun, but they were all completed only 10 days late. Although the exhibition attracted more than two million visitors, it did not generate the international attention some had hoped for.

Still, changing the cityscape had become habitual in modern Barcelona. La Rambla de Catalunya and Avinguda del Paral.lel were both slammed through in 1888. The Monument a Colom and Arc de Triomf, rather odd monuments in some respects (Columbus had little to do with Barcelona and tangible triumphs were in short supply), also were built that year.

## BARCELONA REBORN

Barcelona was comparatively peaceful for most of the second half of the 19th century but far from politically inert. The relative calm and growing wealth that came with commercial success helped revive interest in all things Catalan.

The Renaixença (Renaissance) reflected the feeling in Barcelona of renewed self-confidence. The mood was both backwards- and forwards-looking. Politicians and academics increasingly studied and demanded the return of former Catalan institutions and legal systems. The Catalan language was readopted by the middle and upper classes and new Catalan literature emerged as well.

In 1892 the Unió Catalanista (Catalanist Union) demanded the re-establishment of the Corts in a document known as the *Bases de Manresa*. In 1906 the suppression of Catalan newssheets was greeted by the formation of Solidaritat Catalana (Catalan Solidarity, a nationalist movement). Led by Enric Prat de la Riba, it attracted a broad band of Catalans, not all of them nationalists.

Perhaps the most dynamic expression of the Catalan Renaissance occurred in the world of art. Barcelona was the home of Modernisme, Catalan Art Nouveau. While the rest of Spain stagnated, Barcelona was a hotbed of artistic activity, an avant-garde base with close links to Paris. The young Picasso spread his artistic wings here and drank in the artists' hang-out, Els Quatre Gats (Map pp64–5), a Modernista tavern that today is a somewhat mediocre eatery.

An unpleasant wake-up call came with Spain's short, futile war with the US in 1898, in which it lost not only its entire navy, but its last colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines). The blow to Barcelona's trade was enormous.

## MAYHEM

Barcelona's proletariat was growing fast. The total population grew from 115,000 in 1800 to over 500,000 by 1900 and over one million by 1930 – boosted, in the early 19th century, by poor immigrants from rural Catalonia and, later, from other regions of Spain. All this made Barcelona ripe for unrest.

The city became a swirling vortex of anarchists, Republicans, bourgeois regionalists, gangsters, police terrorists and hired *pistoleros* (gunmen). One anarchist bomb at the Liceu opera house on La Rambla in the 1890s killed 20 people. Anarchists were also blamed for the Setmana Tràgica (Tragic Week) in July 1909 when, following a military call-up for Spanish campaigns in Morocco, rampaging mobs wrecked 70 religious buildings and workers were shot on the street in reprisal.

In the post-WWI slump, unionism took hold. This movement was led by the anarchist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), or National Workers' Confederation, which embraced 80% of the city's workers. During a wave of strikes in 1919 and 1920, employers hired assassins to eliminate union leaders. The 1920s dictator General Miguel Primo de Rivera opposed bourgeois-Catalan nationalism and working-class radicalism, banning the CNT and even closing Barcelona

**1808**

In the Battle of Bruc outside Barcelona, Catalan militiamen defeat occupying Napoleonic units in June. Nonetheless, Barcelona, Figueres and the coast remain under French control until Napoleon is ejected from Spain in 1814.

**1873**

Antoni Gaudí, 21 years old and in Barcelona since 1869, enrols in architecture school, from which he graduates five years later, having already designed the street lamps in Plaça Reial.

**1895**

Málaga-born Pablo Picasso, 13, arrives in Barcelona with his family. His art teacher father gets a job in the Escola de Belles Artes de la Llotja, where Pablo is enrolled as a pupil.

**1898**

Spain loses its entire navy and last remaining colonies (the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico) in two hopeless campaigns against the United States of America, dealing a heavy blow to Barcelona businesses.

**1914**

The Mancomunitat de Catalunya, a first timid attempt at self-rule (restricted largely to administrative matters) and headed by Catalan nationalist Enric Prat de la Riba, is created in April.

**July 1936**

General Franco launches the Spanish Civil War in Morocco. In Barcelona, General Goded leads army units to take the city for Franco but is defeated by a combination of left-wing militia, workers and loyalist police.

## DIVE, DIVE, DIVE

It could have been the Spanish Navy's V2, a late-19th-century secret weapon. Narcis Monturiol i Estarriol (1819–85), part-time publisher and all-round utopian, was fascinated by the sea. In 1859, he launched a wooden, fish-shaped submarine, the *Ictíneo,* in Barcelona. Air shortages made only brief dives possible but Monturiol became an overnight celebrity. He received, however, not a jot of funding.

Undeterred, he sank himself further into debt by designing *Ictíneo II*. This was a first. It was 17m long, its screws were steam driven and Monturiol had devised a system for renewing the oxygen inside the vessel. It was trialled in 1864 but again attracted no finance. Four years later, the vessel was broken up for scrap.

If the Spaniards had had a few of these when they faced the US Navy off Cuba and in the Philippines in 1898, perhaps things might have turned out differently!

football club, a potent symbol of Catalanism. But he did support the staging of a second world fair in Barcelona, the Montjuïc World Exhibition of 1929.

Rivera's repression only succeeded in uniting, after his fall in 1930, Catalonia's radical elements. Within days of the formation of Spain's Second Republic in 1931, leftist Catalan nationalists of the ERC (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya), led by Francesc Macià and Lluís Companys, proclaimed Catalonia a republic within an imaginary 'Iberian Federation'. Madrid pressured them into accepting unitary Spanish statehood but, after the leftist Popular Front victory in the February 1936 national elections, Catalonia briefly won genuine autonomy. Companys, its president, carried out land reforms and planned an alternative Barcelona Olympics to the official 1936 games in Nazi Berlin.

But things were racing out of control. The left and the right across Spain were shaping up for a showdown.

## THE CIVIL WAR

On 17 July 1936, an army uprising in Morocco kick-started the Spanish Civil War. Barcelona's army garrison attempted to take the city for General Franco but was defeated by anarchists and police loyal to the government.

Franco's Nationalist forces quickly took hold of most of southern and western Spain; Galicia and Navarra in the north were also his. Most of the east and industrialised north stood with Madrid. Initial rapid advances on Madrid were stifled and the two sides settled in for almost three years of misery.

For nearly a year, Barcelona was run by anarchists and the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM; the Marxist Unification Workers' Party) Trotskyist militia, with Companys as president only in name. Factory owners and rightists fled the city. Unions took over factories and public services, hotels and mansions became hospitals and schools, everyone wore workers' clothes (in something of a foretaste of what would later happen in Mao's China), bars and cafés were collectivised, trams and taxis were painted red and black (the colours of the anarchists) and one-way streets were ignored as they were seen to be part of the old system.

The anarchists were a disparate lot ranging from gentle idealists to hardliners who drew up death lists, held kangaroo courts, shot priests, monks and nuns (over 1200 of whom were killed in Barcelona province during the civil war), and also burnt and wrecked churches – which is why so many of Barcelona's churches are today oddly plain inside. They in turn were shunted aside by the communists (directed by Stalin from Moscow) after a bloody internecine battle in Barcelona that left 1500 dead in May 1937.

Barcelona became the Republicans' national capital in autumn 1937. The Republican defeat in the Battle of the Ebro in southern Catalonia in summer 1938 left Barcelona undefended. Republican resistance crumbled, partly due to exhaustion, in part due to disunity. In 1938 Catalan nationalists started negotiating separately with the Nationalists. Indeed, the last resistance put up in Barcelona was by some 2000 soldiers of the Fifth Regiment that had fought so long in Madrid! The city fell on 25 January 1939.

That first year of occupation was a strange hiatus before the full machinery of oppression began to weigh in. Within two weeks of the city's fall, a dozen cinemas were in operation and the following month Hollywood comedies were being shown between rounds of Nationalist propaganda. The people were even encouraged to dance the *sardana,* Catalonia's national dance, in public (the Nationalists thought such folkloric generosity might endear them to the people of Barcelona).

On the other hand, the city presented an exhausted picture. The Metro was running but there were no buses (they had all been used on the front). Virtually all the animals in the city zoo had died of starvation or wounds. There were frequent blackouts, and would be for years.

By 1940, with WWII raging across Europe, Franco had his regime more firmly in place and things turned darker for many. Catalan Francoists led the way in rounding up victims and up to 35,000 people were shot in purges. At the same time, small bands of resistance fighters continued to harry the Nationalists in the Pyrenees through much of the 1940s. Lluís Companys was arrested in France by the Gestapo in August 1940, handed over to Franco, and shot on 15 October on Montjuïc. He is reputed to have died with the words 'Visca Catalunya!' ('Long live Catalonia!') on his lips. The executions continued into the 1950s. Barcelonins reacted in different ways. Most accepted the situation and tried to get on with living, while some leapt at opportunities, occupying flats abandoned by 'Reds' who had been forced to flee. Speculators and industrialists in bed with Franco began to make money hand over fist while most people barely managed to keep body and soul together.

## FROM FRANCO TO PUJOL

Franco had already abolished the Generalitat in 1938. Companys was succeeded as the head of the Catalan government-in-exile in Mexico by Josep Irla and, in 1954, by the charismatic Josep Tarradellas, who remained its head until after Franco's demise.

Franco, meanwhile, embarked on a programme of Castilianisation. He banned public use of Catalan and had all town, village and street names rendered in Spanish (Castilian). Book publishing in Catalan was allowed from the mid-1940s, but education, radio, TV and the daily press remained in Spanish.

In Barcelona, the Francoist Josep Maria de Porcioles became mayor in 1957, a post he held until 1973. That same year, he obtained for the city a 'municipal charter' that expanded the mayor's authority and the city's capacity to raise and spend taxes, manage urban development and, ultimately, widen the city's metropolitan limits to absorb neighbouring territory. He was responsible for such monstrosities as the concrete municipal buildings

**March 1938**
In just three days of day and night air raids on Barcelona carried out by Fascist Italian bombers based in Franco-controlled Mallorca, 979 people are killed and 1500 wounded.

**1939**
On 26 January, the first of Franco's troops, along with Italian tanks, roll into Barcelona from Tibidabo and parade down Avinguda Diagonal. Thousands flee the city towards the French border.

**1940**
Hitler's henchman and chief of the SS, Heinrich Himmler visits Barcelona, stays at the Ritz, enjoys a folkloric show at Poble Espanyol and has his wallet stolen.

**1957**
The Francoist Josep Maria de Porcioles becomes mayor of Barcelona and remains in charge until 1973. He presides over a willy-nilly building spurt in the city and builds the first *rondas* (ring roads).

**1980**
Right-wing Catalan nationalist Jordi Pujol is elected president of the resurrected Catalan regional government at the head of the CiU coalition; he remains in power without interruption until 2003.

**1992**
Barcelona is catapulted to the world stage as it hosts the summer Olympic Games. In preparation for the games, the city undergoes a radical renovation programme whose momentum continues to the present.

## BARCELONA, OPEN CITY

It made little difference to Benito Mussolini, General Franco's overbearing Fascist comrade-in-arms, that Barcelona possessed few military targets worthy of note beyond its port and railway, or that it had been declared an open city precisely to avoid its destruction.

In a trial run for the horrors that would rain down on Europe in WWII, Italian bombers based in Mallorca (joined towards the end of the war by Germany's terrifying Junkers JU87 Stuka dive-bombers), carried out air raids on the largely defenceless city (only three Italian planes were brought down over Barcelona in the entire war) regularly from 16 March 1937 to 24 January 1939, a day before Nationalist troops marched in. Mussolini ordered the raids with or without Franco's blessing, which the latter often withheld, realising that indiscriminate bombing of civilians would hardly boost his popularity. Indeed, Franco prohibited attacks on urban centres in March 1938, after three days of relentless raids that cost almost 1000 lives, but the Italians paid no heed. By the end of the war, almost 3000 Barcelonins had been killed, with 7000 wounded and 1800 buildings destroyed.

In a radio broadcast on 18 June 1940, as the Battle of Britain began, Winston Churchill declared: 'I do not underrate the severity of the ordeal which lies before us but I believe our countrymen will show themselves capable of standing up to it like the brave men of Barcelona.' He might have added women and children, who together formed the bulk of the bombers' victims.

on Plaça de Sant Miquel in the Barri Gòtic. His rule marked a grey time for Barcelona. Barely regulated urban expansion was the norm and decades of grime accumulated on the face of the city, hiding the delightful flights of architectural fantasy that today draw so many visitors.

By the 1950s, opposition to Franco had turned to peaceful mass protests and strikes. In 1960, an audience at the city's Palau de la Música Catalana concert hall (p87) sang a banned Catalan anthem in front of Franco. The ringleaders included a young Catholic banker, Jordi Pujol, who would later rise to pre-eminence in the post-Franco era. For his singing effort he wound up in jail for a short time.

Under Franco a flood of 1.5 million immigrants from poorer parts of Spain, chiefly Andalucía, Extremadura and the northwest, poured into Catalonia (750,000 of them to Barcelona) in the 1950s and '60s looking for work. Many lived in appalling conditions. While some made the effort to learn Catalan and integrate as fully as possible into local society, the majority came to form Spanish-speaking pockets in the poorer working-class districts of the city and in a ring of satellite towns. Even today, the atmosphere in many of these towns is more Andalucian than Catalan. Catalan nationalists will tell you it was all part of a Francoist plot to undermine the Catalan identity.

Two years after Franco's death in 1975, Josep Tarradellas was invited to Madrid to hammer out the Catalan part of a regional autonomy policy. Eighteen days later, King Juan Carlos I decreed the re-establishment of the Generalitat and recognised Josep Tarradellas as its president. Twenty years after his stint in Franco's jails, Pujol was elected Tarradellas' successor at the head of the rightwing Catalan nationalist Convergència i Unió (CiU) coalition in April 1980. A wily antagonist of the central authorities in Madrid, he waged a quarter-century war of attrition, eking out greater fiscal and policy autonomy and vigorously promoting a re-Catalanisation programme, with uneven success.

Politics aside, the big event in post-Franco Barcelona was the successful 1992 Olympics, planned under the guidance of the Socialist mayor, Pasqual Maragall. The Games spurred a burst of public works and brought new life to areas such as Montjuïc, where the major events were held. The once-shabby waterfront was transformed with promenades, beaches, marinas, restaurants, leisure attractions and new housing.

## A LEFTWARD LURCH & TUNNEL VISION

Pujol remained in power until 2003, when he stepped aside to make way for his designated successor, party colleague Artur Mas. Things didn't go according to plan, as Pasqual Maragall pipped Mas at the post and formed an unsteady three-party coalition government in November 2003.

Maragall's principal achievement was reaching agreement between his Partit Socialista de Catalunya (PSC), his coalition partners Iniciativa Verds-Esquerra Unida (Green Initiative-United Left) and independence-minded Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC, Republican Left of Catalonia), and the opposition CiU on a new autonomy statute (Estatut). Since the demise of Franco, Spain has devolved considerable powers to the regions, which are officially known as *comunidades autónomas* (autonomous communities). All the Catalan parties (with the exception of the right-wing centralist Partido Popular, or PP) agreed on the need to acquire still greater powers through a new statute. The proposed statute was submitted to the national Spanish parliament for consideration in 2005 and was the subject of tough bargaining.

In early 2006, Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's governing Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, of which the PSC is a branch) and CiU struck a deal, behind Maragall's back, to approve a modified version of the Estatut.

Maragall reluctantly went along with the deal but his ERC allies protested and forced the dissolution of the Catalan parliament and snap elections in autumn 2006. Maragall, accused of weakness in the face of the ERC by the PSOE, was obliged to make way for Madrid's preferred candidate, José Montilla. In a virtual re-run, Montilla won by such a narrow margin that he was forced to re-establish the weak three-party coalition of his predecessor.

Catalans approved the new Estatut in a referendum in 2006 but within months it was being claimed that Madrid was dragging its feet on implementation. In September 2007 Barcelona and Madrid agreed on a budget package for Catalonia that went some way to calming waters. Meanwhile, the PP launched an appeal in the Constitutional Court to repeal the Estatut, which it claims grants too much autonomy.

The ERC, whose ultimate objective is Catalan independence (a 2007 poll of Catalans suggested 60% wanted a referendum on independence, although only 18% wanted to separate Catalonia from Spain), made spectacular political gains in the 2003 Catalan elections and 2004 national elections.

Jordi Hereu, the PSC candidate who had replaced Joan Clos as mayor in 2006, came out on top in the city's 2007 elections – just. ERC came off worse than expected and returned to opposition rather than accept a reduced role in a coalition government. This left Hereu running a minority government. Since then, the ERC (which in the March 2008 national elections lost five of its eight seats in Madrid) has played a spoiler role at the municipal and regional level, doing an about-face and voting with other opposition parties to freeze plans for the controversial high-speed rail tunnel across central Barcelona. Given that the tunnel has already been given the go-ahead, these votes amount to little more than grandstanding.

**January 1994**
The Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona's opera house, burns to the ground as a spark from a welder's blowtorch sets the stage area alight. It is rebuilt and reopens in 1999.

**2003**
Popular former mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall becomes the first Socialist president of Catalonia (with a wobbly three-party coalition) in tight elections after Pujol steps aside in favour of CiU's Artur Mas.

**2006**
The Catalan government negotiates a new autonomy statute with Madrid in a compromise that leaves many unsatisfied and ultimately leads to the fall of Maragall. His replacement, after snap elections, is fellow Socialist José Montilla.

**December 2007**
Some 200,000 demonstrate in Barcelona over months of rail chaos due to work on the high-speed AVE train link to Madrid. The event quickly degenerates into a pro-independence march.

**January 2008**
A group of 15 Pakistanis and Indians, mostly resident in Barcelona, is arrested on suspicion of planning suicide bomb attacks on the metro system in the Catalan capital.

**March 2008**
Socialist Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero wins second four-year term in office at Spanish national elections, with 169 seats (seven short of an absolute majority) to the right-wing opposition Partido Popular's 153 seats.

The tunnel (which will run below the street next to two Gaudí monuments, the Sagrada Família and La Pedrera, on its 6km route between Estació Sants and a new transport junction at La Sagrera) has sparked opposition from directly affected neighbours and management of the Sagrada Família. The latter claims vibrations due to tunnelling and train traffic will imperil Barcelona's number-one cultural sight. The city, regional and national governments rubbish such claims. Experts are divided.

Assurances that everything will be all right, however, ring hollow to many Barcelonins after the years of chaos and suffering caused by construction of the high-speed line from Madrid to Estació Sants. Not only did it arrive six years late (in early 2008), but it caused damage to nearby housing, intolerable living conditions as works proceeded apace 24 hours a day, and the collapse for months in the latter half of 2007 of the underfunded local train network unleashed by the line works (including the caving in of a rail tunnel). This suggests to many that those responsible can hardly guarantee problem-free construction of the planned tunnel. Few who tried to catch a train into central Barcelona from the airport in much of 2006 and 2007 will have failed to notice just how appalling the situation was.

And no-one has forgotten the 2005 implosion of a metro tunnel under construction in the suburb of El Carmel, which destroyed four apartment blocks and left more than 1200 people homeless.

For years, Barcelona and the regional Catalan government have railed against Madrid's lack of investment in infrastructure in Catalonia, from transport to electricity supply. As if the rail chaos were not enough, part of the city was plunged into darkness for several days in July 2007 in a chain reaction of burn-outs at city sub-stations.

# ARTS

Once home to Picasso and Miró, Barcelona has had an on-and-off run as a centre of artistic creation. Today, art galleries and museums abound, world-class exhibitions are standard fare and there is a hum in the air. While cinema is largely the preserve of Madrid, Barcelona is Spain's publishing capital and many of the country's top writers are Catalans. If only to reach a broader market, many of them choose to write in Spanish. On the other hand, a bevy of musicians, from stalwarts with an international following to eager young rock bands, cheerfully belt out their songs in Catalan, a tradition that started in part as a way of flouting Francoist cultural repression. For many a young local, Catalan rock rocks!

## PAINTING & SCULPTURE

### The Middle Ages

Many anonymous artists left their work behind in medieval Catalonia, mostly in the form of frescoes, altarpieces and the like in Romanesque and Gothic churches. But a few leading lights managed to get some credit. Gothic painter Ferrer Bassá (c 1290–1348) was one of the region's first recognised masters. Influenced by the Italian school of Siena, his few surviving works include murals with a slight touch of caricature in the Monestir de Pedralbes (p124).

Bernat Martorell (1400–52), a master of chiaroscuro who was active in the mid-15th century, was one of the region's leading exponents of International Gothic. As the Flemish school gained influence, painters like Jaume Huguet (1415–92) adopted its sombre realism, lightening the style with Hispanic splashes of gold, as in his *Sant Jordi* in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC; p139). Another of his paintings hangs in the Museu Frederic Marès (p68).

In the latter museum you may be overwhelmed by the collection of medieval wooden sculpture. Mostly anonymous sculptors were busy throughout Catalonia from at least the 12th century, carving religious images for the growing number of churches. Although saints and other characters sometimes figured, by far the most common subjects were Christ crucified and the Virgin Mary with the Christ child sitting on her lap.

Another source of exquisite sculpture lies in VIP sarcophagi. Examples range from the alabaster memorial to Santa Eulàlia in La Catedral (p61) to the pantheon of count-kings in the Reial-Monestir de Santa Maria de Poblet (see the boxed text, p260) outside Barcelona.





### Fortuny's Century

Little of greatness was achieved in Catalan painting and sculpture from the end of the Middle Ages to the 19th century. Barcelona neither produced nor attracted any El Grecos, Velázquezs, Zurbaráns, Murillos or Goyas.

By the mid-19th century, Realisme was the modish medium on canvas, reaching a zenith with the work of Marià Fortuny (1838–74). The best known (and largest) of his paintings is the 'official' version of the *Batalla de Tetuán* (Battle of Tetuán; 1863), depicting a rousing Spanish victory over a ragtag Moroccan enemy in North Africa. Fortuny, whom many consider the best Catalan artist of the 19th century, left his native turf for Italy in 1857, where he died in Rome. He had lived for a time in Venice, where his lodgings now constitute a gallery of his works.

**top picks**

**BEST MUSEUM FOR…**

- Ancient History Buffs: Museu d'Història de la Ciutat (p67)
- Lovers of the Sea and Gothic Architecture: Museu Marítim (p78)
- Devotees of Romanesque Art: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (p139)
- Aficionados of Pre-Colombian Art: Museu Barbier-Mueller d'Art Pre-Colombí (p87)
- Kids and Chocoholics: Museu de la Xocolata (p89)

### Modernisme & Noucentisme

Towards the end of the 19th century, a fresher generation of artists emerged – the Modernistas. Influenced by their French counterparts (Paris was seen as Europe's artistic capital), the Modernistas allowed themselves greater freedom in interpretation than the Realists. They sought not so much to portray observed 'reality' as to interpret it subjectively and infuse it with flights of their own fantasy.

Ramón Casas (1866–1932) and Santiago Rusiñol (1861–1931) were the leading lights of Modernista painting. The former was a wealthy dilettante of some talent, the latter a more earnest soul who ran a close second. Both were the toast of the bohemian set in turn-of-the-20th-century Barcelona. The single best collection of works by these two artists is on show in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC; p139).

In a similar class was Josep Llimona (1864–1934), the most prolific and prominent sculptor of the late 19th century and on into the 1930s. His works can be seen scattered about town today, ranging from the statue of Ramon Berenguer el Gran on the square of the same name just off Via Laietana to friezes on the Monument a Colom (p71). He is often classed as a Modernista but his style was in constant development across a long career.

From about 1910, as Modernisme fizzled, the more conservative cultural movement Noucentisme (loosely '20th centuryism') sought, in general, to advance Catalonia by looking backwards. The Noucentistas demanded a return to a 'healthier' classicism, clarity and 'Mediterranean light' after the 'excesses' of the Modernistas. From about 1917, a second wave of Noucentistas challenged these notions, which had begun to feel like an artistic straitjacket.

Among the Noucentistas, Joaquim Sunyer (1874–1956) and Isidre Nonell (1876–1911) were clearly influenced by the likes of Cézanne; some of their works can be seen in the MNAC. They were soon to be overshadowed by true genius.

### 20th-Century Masters

#### PABLO PICASSO

Born in Málaga in Andalucía, Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881–1973) was already sketching by the age of nine. After a stint in La Coruña (in Galicia), he landed in Barcelona in 1895. His father had obtained a post teaching art at the Escola de Belles Artes de la Llotja (then housed in the stock exchange building) and had his son enrolled there too. It was in Barcelona and Catalonia that Picasso matured, spending his time ceaselessly drawing and painting.

After a stint at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid in 1897, Picasso spent six months with his friend Manuel Pallarès in bucolic Horta de Sant Joan, in western Catalonia –

he would later claim that it was there he learned everything he knew. In Barcelona, Picasso lived and worked in the Barri Gòtic and El Raval (where he was introduced to the seamier side of life in the Barri Xinès).

By the time Picasso moved to France in 1904, he had explored his first highly personal style. In this so-called Blue Period, his canvases have a melancholy feel heightened by the trademark dominance of dark blues. Some of his portraits and cityscapes from this period were created in and inspired by what he saw in Barcelona. Plenty of pieces from this period hang in the Museu Picasso (p83).

This was followed by the Pink (or Rose) Period, in which Picasso's subjects became merrier and the colouring leaned towards light pinks and greys.

Picasso was a turbulent character and gifted not only as a painter but as a sculptor, graphic designer and ceramicist. Down the years, his work encompassed many style changes. With *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (Ladies of Avignon; 1907), Picasso broke with all forms of traditional representation, introducing a deformed perspective that would later spill over into cubism. The subject was supposedly taken from the Carrer d'Avinyó in the Barri Gòtic, in those days populated with a series of brothels.

By the mid-1920s, he was dabbling with surrealism. His best-known work is *Guernica* (in Madrid's Centro de Arte Reina Sofia), a complex painting portraying the horror of war, inspired by the German aerial bombing of the Basque town Gernika in 1937.

Picasso worked prolifically during and after WWII and he was still cranking out paintings, sculptures, ceramics and etchings until the day he died in 1973.

## top picks

### GALLERIES

- CaixaForum (p142) A beautifully restored Modernista factory that hosts top art exhibitions.
- Museu Picasso (p83) A unique insight into the early years of Picasso's career.
- Fundació Joan Miró (p143) A grand canvas of this local boy's life's work.
- Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (p79) Barcelona's main contemporary art palace, with constantly changing exhibitions.
- Fundació Antoni Tàpies (p109) A Modernista home for a selection of the great Catalan contemporary painter's work and exhibitions of other artists.

### JOAN MIRÓ

By the time the 13-year-old Picasso arrived in Barcelona, his near contemporary, Joan Miró (1893–1983), was cutting his teeth on rusk biscuits in the Barri Gòtic, where he was born. He spent a third of his life in Barcelona but later divided his time between France, the Tarragona countryside and the island of Mallorca, where he ended his days.

Like Picasso, Miró attended the Escola de Belles Artes de la Llotja. He was initially uncertain about his artistic vocation – in fact he studied commerce. In Paris from 1920, he mixed with Picasso, Hemingway, Joyce and friends, and made his own mark, after several years of struggle, with an exhibition in 1925. The masterpiece from this, his so-called realist period, was *La Masia* (Farmhouse).

It was during WWII, while living in seclusion in Normandy, that Miró's definitive leitmotifs emerged. Among the most important images that appear frequently throughout his work are women, birds (the link between earth and the heavens), stars (the unattainable heavenly world, the source of imagination), and a sort of net entrapping all these levels of the cosmos. The Miró works that most people are acquainted with emerged from this time – arrangements of lines and symbolic figures in primary colours, with shapes reduced to their essence.

In the 1960s and '70s, Miró devoted more of his time to creating sculpture and designing textiles, largely employing the same kinds of symbolic figures as those in his paintings. He lived in Mallorca, home of his wife Pilar Juncosa, from 1956 until his death in 1983. The Fundació Joan Miró (p143), housed in Montjuïc, has the single largest collection of Miró's work in the world today.

### SALVADOR DALÍ

Although he spent precious little time in Barcelona, and nothing much of his can be seen in the city, it would be churlish to leave Salvador Dalí i Domènech (1904–89) out of the picture. He was born and died in Figueres, where he left his single greatest artistic legacy, the Teatre-Museu Dalí (p249).





### STREET TREATS

Barcelona hosts an array of street sculpture, from Miró's 1983 Dona i Ocell (Map pp140–1), in the park dedicated to the artist, to Peix (Fish; Map pp98–9), Frank Gehry's shimmering, bronze-coloured headless fish facing Port Olímpic. Halfway along La Rambla, at Plaça de la Boqueria, you can walk all over Miró's *Mosaïc de Miró*. Picasso left an open-air mark with his design on the façade of the Col.legi de Arquitectes (Map pp64–5) opposite La Catedral in the Barri Gòtic.

Others you may want to keep an eye out for are Barcelona's Head (Map p93) by Roy Lichtenstein at the Port Vell end of Via Laietana and Fernando Botero's characteristically tumescent El Gat (Map pp76–7) on Rambla del Raval.

Just plain weird is what looks like a precarious pile of square rusty containers on Platja de Sant Sebastià. Made in 1992 by Rebecca Horn, it is called Homenatge a la Barceloneta (Tribute to La Barceloneta; Map p93). Odd tribute. A little further south is the 2003 Homenatge als Nedadors (Tribute to the Swimmers; Map p93), a complex metallic rendition of swimmers and divers in the water by Alfredo Lanz. Odder still, while on the subject of tributes, is Antoni Tàpies' 1983 Homenatge a Picasso (aka *L'Estel Ferit*, the Wounded Star; Map p84–5) on Passeig de Picasso, a glass cube set in a pond and filled with, well, junk.

Antoni Llena's David i Goliat (Map pp98–9), a massive sculpture of tubular and sheet iron, in the Parc de les Cascades near Port Olímpic's two skyscrapers, looks like an untidy kite inspired by Halloween. Beyond this, Avinguda d'Icària is lined by architect Enric Miralles' so-called *Pergoles* – bizarre, twisted metal contraptions.

And who is taking the mickey at the bottom end of Rambla de Catalunya? The statue of a thinking bull is simply called Meditation (Map pp108–9), but one wonders what Rodin would make of it.

One of the best known pieces of public art whimsy is Xavier Mariscal's Gamba (Prawn, although it is actually a crayfish; Map p93) on Passeig de Colom. Stuck here in 1987 on the roof of the Gambrinus bar, when this strip was lined by popular designer bars (which unfortunately disappeared in the late 1990s), it has remained as a kind of seafood symbol of the city (and was restored in 2004).

For a comprehensive look at street art (and much more), go to the city of Barcelona's main website (www.bcn.cat) and click on Art Públic (under La Ciutat/The City). Here you will find a host of files on public sculpture, along with a host of other categories of art and architecture.

Prolific painter, showman, shameless self-promoter or just plain weirdo, Dalí was nothing if not a character – probably a little too much for the conservative small-town folk of Figueres.

Every now and then a key moment arrives that can change the course of one's life. Dalí's came in 1929, when the French poet Paul Éluard visited Cadaqués with his Russian wife, Gala. The rest, as they say, is histrionics. Dalí shot off to Paris to be with Gala and plunged into the world of surrealism.

In the 1930s, Salvador and Gala returned to live at Port Lligat on the north Catalan coast, where they played host to a long list of fashionable and art-world guests until the war years – the parties were by all accounts memorable.

They started again in Port Lligat in the 1950s. The stories of sexual romps and Gala's appetite for young local boys are legendary. The 1960s saw Dalí painting pictures on a grand scale, including his 1962 reinterpretation of Marià Fortuny's *Batalla de Tetuán*. On his death in 1989, he was buried (according to his own wish) in the Teatre-Museu he had created on the site of the old theatre in central Figueres, which now houses the single greatest collection of Dalí's work.

## The Present

Artistic life did not come grinding to a halt with the demise of Miró and Dalí. Barcelona has for decades been a minor cauldron of activity, dominated by the figure of Antoni Tàpies (1923–), an elder statesman of Catalan contemporary art. Early in his career (from the mid-1940s onwards) he seemed keen on self-portraits, but also experimented with collage using all sorts of materials from wood to rice. Check out his Fundació Antoni Tàpies (p109).

Joan Brossa (1921–98) was a cultural beacon in Barcelona, a poet, artist and man of theatre. His 'visual poems', lithographs and other artworks in which letters generally figure, along with all sorts of objects, make his world accessible to those who can't read his Catalan poetry. Get a taste at the Fundació Joan Brossa (p113).

Barcelona-born Jaume Plensa (1955–) is possibly Spain's best contemporary sculptor. His work ranges from sketches through to sculpture, and video and other installations that have

been shown around the world. In 2008 he took centre stage as a guest sculptor at Arco, Madrid's international contemporary art fair. He has left grand pieces of public sculpture in more than 35 locations around the world.

Joan Hernández Pijuan (1931–2005) was one of the most important 20th-century abstract painters to come out of Barcelona. Having studied, like Picasso and Miró, at the Llotja, he produced work concentrating on natural shapes and figures, often using neutral colours on different surfaces.

Xavier Corberó (1935–), influenced by his friend Salvador Dalí, has created a mixed oeuvre of difficult-to-classify sculptures that betray something of the dream-nightmare quality so often apparent in Dalí's work.

Susana Solano (1946–) is a painter and sculptor, one of the most important at work in Spain today and certainly one of Barcelona's best. She often uses steel in her works, such as *Huella Desnuda Que Mira* (Naked Trace Looking), and frequently designs for large open spaces. But her palette is broad, extending to video installations, collages, jewellery and smaller-scale sculpture.

Jordi Colomer (1962–) makes heavy use of audiovisual material in his artworks, creating highly imaginative spaces and three-dimensional images. Somewhat hallucinatory videos such as *Simo* and *Pianito* shot him to fame in the late 1990s, but his latest work *Prototipos* (2005) embraces sculpture (of a sort) with a selection of what look like weird white classic cars.

Some of the paintings of Joanpere Massana (1968–), born in the province of Lleida but educated in Barcelona, are a little reminiscent of Tàpies, with his use of different materials and broad brushstrokes to create striking images. He also does installation art. David Casals (1976–), who only finished his degree at the University of Barcelona in 1999, already has behind him an impressive series of exhibitions for his paintings, which include thoughtful landscapes done in acrylic on paper or wood.

To see the work of these and other artists head first to the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Macba; p79), where you will get a good introductory look at what is happening in contemporary local art. CaixaForum (p142) and the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica (p61) are excellent public galleries. The latter concentrates on contemporary artists, including a bevy of emerging Catalan talent.

The private commercial gallery scene has traditionally been concentrated on and around Carrer del Consell de Cent, between Passeig de Gràcia and Carrer d'Aribau. A handful of classic galleries operate in the Barri Gòtic, of which the long-standing Sala Parés (p155) is the most interesting if you want to tap into shows by a broad range of Catalan artists working today. Also worth keeping an eye on is the Art Barcelona association of more than 25 art galleries (www.artbarcelona.es). You can see what's on show in these galleries on the website. A bigger umbrella group of more than 100 art galleries throughout Catalonia is the Gremi de Galeries d'Art de Catalunya. Check out their useful website (www.galeriescatalunya.com).

# LITERATURE

Barcelona is the beating heart of Spanish publishing. All the literary big-hitters, such as Tusquets Editores (run by the formidable Esther Tusquets, Catalonia's formidable first lady of letters), Seix-Barral, Anagrama, Planeta and Quaderns Crema, are based here. Catalonia teems with world-class writers.

## From Law Codes to the Segle d'Or

The earliest surviving documents written in Catalan date from the 12th century and include the *Homilies d'Organyà,* a religious work.

### top picks

**BOOKS**

- La Sombra del Viento (The Shadow of the Wind; 2004), Carlos Ruiz Zafón
- La Ciudad de los Prodigios (The City of Marvels; 1986), Eduardo Mendoza
- Homage to Catalonia (1938), George Orwell
- Plaça del Diamant (The Time of the Doves; 1962), Mercè Rodoreda
- La Catedral del Mar (Cathedral of the Sea; 2006), Ildefonso Falcones





The first great Catalan writer was Ramon Llull (1235–1315), who eschewed the use of Latin and Provençal. His two best-known works are *El Llibre de les Bèsties* (Book of Beasts) and *El Llibre d'Amic i Amat* (Book of the Friend and the Loved One), the former an allegorical attack on feudal corruption and the latter a series of short pieces aimed at daily meditation.

The count-king Jaume I was a bit of a scribbler himself, writing a rare autobiographical work called *Llibre dels Feyts* (Book of Deeds) in the late 13th century.

Everyone has a 'golden century', and for Catalan writers it was the 15th. Ausiàs March (1400–59), from Valencia, forged a poetic tradition that inspires Catalan poets to this day.

Several European peoples claim responsibility for producing the first novel. The Catalans claim it was Joanot Martorell (c 1405–65), with *Tirant lo Blanc* (Tirant the White Knight). Cervantes himself thought it the best book in the world. Martorell was a busy fighting knight and his writing tells of bloody battles, war, politics and sex. Some things don't change!

## Renaixença

Catalan literature declined after the 15th century and only began to make a comeback with the economic boom of the 19th century, which brought a renewal of interest in intellectual circles in all things Catalan. The revival of Catalan literature is commonly dated to 1833, when homesick Carles Aribau (1798–1862) penned the rather saccharine poem *A la Pàtria* (To the Homeland) in Madrid. Catalonia's bard was, however, a country pastor called Jacint Verdaguer (1845–1902), whose *L'Atlàntida* is an epic that defies easy description. Verdaguer's death in a farmhouse outside Barcelona (Parc de Collserola; see p134) was greeted as a national tragedy.

Modernisme's main literary voice was the poet Joan Maragall (1860–1911). Also noteworthy is the work of Víctor Català (1873–1966), actually Caterina Albert. Her principal work, *Solitud* (Solitude), charts the awakening of a young woman whose husband has taken her to live in the Pyrenees.

## Into the 20th Century

What Verdaguer was to poetry, Josep Pla (1897–1981) was to prose. He wrote in Catalan and Spanish and his work ranged from travel writing (after Franco's victory in 1939 he spent many years abroad) to histories and fiction.

Mercè Rodoreda (1909–83), who spent many years in exile after the Spanish Civil War, published one of her best-known works, *Plaça del Diamant* (The Time of the Doves) in 1962. It recounts life in Barcelona before, during and after the war, through the eyes of a struggling working-class woman.

In the 1930s, George Orwell (1903–50) was one of many idealistic leftists who flooded into Barcelona to join the fight against Franco's Nationalist forces. His account of those difficult days, *Homage to Catalonia,* is a classic.

Juan Goytisolo (1931–), who lives in Marrakech, started off in the neo-Realist camp but his more recent works, such as the trilogy made up of *Señas de Identidad* (Marks of Identity), *Reivindicacion del Conde Don Julián* (Count Julian) and *Juan sin Tierra* (John the Landless), are decidedly more experimental and by far his most powerful writings. Much of his work revolves around sexuality, as he equates sexual freedom (he is bisexual) with political freedom.

Goytisolo's contemporary, Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929–90), was one of Spain's key 20th-century poets.

Montserrat Roig (1946–91) crammed a lot of journalistic and fiction writing (largely in Catalan) into her short life. Her novels include *Ramon Adéu* (Goodbye Ramon) and *El Temps de les Cireres* (The Time of the Cherries).

Manuel Vázquez Montalbán (1939–2003) was one of the city's most prolific writers, and is best known for his Pepe Carvalho detective novel series and a range of other thrillers. Montalbán shared with his character Pepe a predilection for the semi-obscurity of El Raval, where he ate frequently at Casa Leopoldo (p174). Among his works available in English are thrillers such as *Murder in the Central Committee* and *Galíndez*. The latter is about the capture, torture and death of a Basque activist in the Dominican Republic in the 1950s. The kinds of character that pop up in Carvalho's world would have had a lot in common

with the tortured French writer, Jean Genet, whose 1949 novel, *Journal du Voleur* (Diary of a Thief) is set in the then much dodgier streets of El Raval.

Barcelona writer Joan Sales i Vallès (1912–1983) left behind some powerful novels, such as *Incerta Glòria* (Uncertain Glory) and *El Vent de la Nit* (Night Wind), on the Spanish Civil War, love and defeat.

Jorge Semprún (1923–), who wound up in a Nazi concentration camp for his activities with the French Resistance in WWII, writes mostly in French. His first novel, *Le Grand Voyage* (The Long Voyage), is one of his best. It is his account of the agonising journey of a young Spaniard who had fought with the French Resistance on his way to the Buchenwald concentration camp – it is his own story.

Mario Lacruz (1929–2000) was better known as a publisher than as a novelist but after his death a curious manuscript, written in English in the 1960s, was discovered. *Gaudí, Una Novela,* posthumously published in Spanish and Catalan, is an intriguing novel about the architect.

### CASANOVA IN JAIL AGAIN

That incorrigible Venetian lover and one-time inmate of the Piombi jail in Venice's Palazzo Ducale, Giacomo Casanova (1725–98) arrived in Barcelona in 1769, having been expelled from Paris and spent some time trundling around Spain in search of a little peace and work. Seemingly unable to keep out of trouble, Casanova got tangled up with a lively ballerina, who happened to be the lover of the governor of Catalonia. It is perhaps unsurprising that Casanova wound up behind bars in the Ciutadella castle. After 40 days' incarceration, he was set free and moved on to Perpignan, back on French territory, where he presumably breathed a sigh of relief.

## The Present

One of Montalbán's contemporaries, Juan Marsé (1933–) is another iconic figure on the Barcelona literature scene. Among his outstanding novels is *El Embrujo de Shanghai* (The Shanghai Spell). Set in Gràcia, it was brought to the screen in a memorable film by Fernando Trueba in 2002. The story revolves around characters struggling along in the wake of the civil war and a 14-year-old's timid discovery of love. Rather more rough and tumble is *Canciones de Amor en el Lolita's Club* (Love Songs in Lolita's Club), an excursion into the seedy world of prostitution and pimps.

Eduardo Mendoza (1943–) is one of Barcelona's finest contemporary writers. His *La Ciudad de los Prodigios* (The City of Marvels) is an absorbing and at times bizarre novel set in the city in the period between the Universal Exhibition of 1888 and the World Exhibition of 1929.

Enrique Vila-Matas (1948–) has won fans way beyond his native Barcelona and his novels have been translated into a dozen languages. In *Paris No Se Acaba Nunca* (Paris Never Ends), Vila-Matas returns to the 1970s, when he rented a garret in Paris from Marguerite Duras and penned his first novel.

The runaway success story in the bookstore in recent times has been *La Sombra del Viento* (The Shadow of the Wind), by Barcelona-born, US-based Carlos Ruiz Zafón (1964–). This engaging, multi-layered mystery story plays out over several periods in Barcelona's 20th-century history. Hot on Zafón's tail is Ildefonso Falcones (1945–) with his *La Catedral del Mar* (Cathedral of the Sea), a historical novel set in medieval Barcelona and telling the story of construction of the Església de Santa Maria del Mar (p83) in La Ribera, a Gothic beauty raised in record-, and for many of its workers, back-breaking time. It is not timeless literature but offers interesting insights into medieval life in Barcelona.

Quim Monzó (1952–) is perhaps the highest profile author writing in Catalan today. He churns out a stream of short stories, columns and essays. His wide-ranging work is marked by a mordant wit and an abiding interest in pornography. He revised his best stories and published them under one volume, *Vuitanta-sis Contes* (Eighty-six Short Stories), in 1999.

A rarity on the local literary scene is Matthew Tree, a born and bred Brit who has lived in Catalonia since the mid-1980s and writes predominantly in Catalan. His *Aniversari* (2005) is a penetrating look at his adopted home, at once an insider's and outsider's view.



# MUSIC

## Contemporary

Curiously, it was probably the Franco repression that most helped foster a vigorous local music scene in Catalan. In those dark years, the Nova Cançó (New Song) movement was born in the 1950s to resist linguistic oppression with music in Catalan (getting air time on the radio was long close to impossible), throwing up stars that in some cases won huge popularity throughout Spain, such as the Valencia-born Raimon (1940–).

More specifically loved in Catalonia as a Bob Dylan–style 1960s protest singer-songwriter was Lluís Llach (1948–), much of whose music was more or less anti-regime. Joan Manuel Serrat (1943–) is another legendary figure. His appeal stretches from Barcelona to Buenos Aires. Born in the Poble Sec district, this poet-singer is equally at ease in Catalan and Spanish. He has repeatedly shown that record sales are not everything to him. In 1968 he refused to represent Spain at the Eurovision song contest if he were not allowed to sing in Catalan. Accused of being anti-Spanish, he was long banned from performing in Spain.

A specifically local strand of rock has emerged since the 1980s. Rock Català (Catalan rock) is not essentially different from rock anywhere else, except that it is sung in Catalan by local bands that appeal to local tastes. Among the most popular and long-lived groups are Sau, Els Pets (one of the region's top acts), Lax'n Busto and the Valenciano band, Obrint Pas.

The annual summer Senglar Rock music festival (www.senglarrock.com) is *the* date for Catalan rock music, usually spiced up with some international acts. Since 2005 it has been held over three days in Lleida, but the dates and location tend to change each year.

The Pinker Tones is a Barcelona duo that has quickly scaled the heights of international popularity with an eclectic electronic mix of music, ranging from dizzy dance numbers to film soundtracks. Their second album, *The Million Colour Revolution,* is their best. Another Barcelona band with international ambitions and flavours is Macaco. Their latest album, *Ingravitto,* is an eloquent expression of this, with lyrics in several languages and a musical mix inspired by anything from reggae to Manu Chao (the French-Latino singer-songwriter who for years has lived in Barcelona). When people talk about 'Raval sound' (after the name of the still somewhat seedy old town district), this is the kind of thing they mean.

Far greater success across Spain has gone to Estopa, a male rock duo from Cornellà, a satellite suburb of Barcelona. The guitar-wielding brothers sing a clean Spanish rock, occasionally with a vaguely flamenco flavour. Pastora is a Barcelona trio that peddles a successful brand of soft Spanish pop.

Sabadell-born Albert Pla (1966–) is one of the most controversial singer-songwriters on the national scene today. Swinging between his brand of forthright rock lyrics, stage and cinema, he is a multifaceted maestro. His latest CD, *Vida y Milagros,* is as good as any.

For a pleasing combination of rock and folk, Mesclat is a group to watch out for and particularly popular on their home turf. Band members come from all over Catalonia. They have cut a couple of CDs, *Mesclat* and *Manilla.*

### THE POWER OF PAU

Pau Casals (1876–1973) was one of the greatest cellists of the 20th century. Born in El Vendrell, in southern Catalonia, he was playing in the orchestra of the Teatre del Liceu by the age of 20 and, in 1899, he debuted in London and Paris. He chose exile in southern France after Franco's victory in the civil war. In 1946 he declared he would not play in public any more as long as the Western democracies continued to tolerate Franco's regime. One of the most moving moments of his career came when he accepted a request to play before the UN General Assembly in New York in 1958. The concert was transmitted by radio around the world and that same year he was a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In his later years he worked increasingly as a conductor. He was also a prolific composer of operatic songs, although the bulk of his works remain unpublished. He died in Puerto Rico in 1973, and his remains were brought back to El Vendrell in 1979. You can visit the beachside Museu Pau Casals (☎ 977 68 42 76; www.paucasals.org; Avinguda Palfuriana 67, Sant Salvador, near El Vendrell) in the house he had built as a summer retreat in 1910. Take the regular *rodalies* train from Barcelona (Passeig de Gràcia) to Sant Vicenç de Calders (€4.10, one hour 10 minutes). And don't forget your swimming costume!

To get a further look into the Barcelona music scene, have a listen to Scanner.BCN (www.bcn.cat/scannerbcn). Jazz lovers curious about what's cooking in Barcelona can tune into Barcelonajazzradio (www.barcelonajazzradio.com).

Badalona boy Ángel Molina is possibly the most sought-after DJ in Spain, not just his near-native Barcelona. He is what you might call a thinking person's DJ, mixing all sorts of sounds and indulging in a little experimentation rather than pounding a techno board. See also p197.

### LONGING FOR CUBA

The oldest musical tradition to have survived to some degree in Catalonia is that of the *havaneres* (from Havana) – nostalgic songs and melancholy sea shanties brought back from Cuba by Catalans who lived, sailed and traded there in the 19th century. Even after Spain lost Cuba in 1898, the *havanera* tradition (a mix of European and Cuban rhythms) continued. A magical opportunity to enjoy these songs is the *Cantada d'Havaneres,* an evening concert held in Calella, on the Costa Brava, on or around 1 July. Otherwise, you may stumble across performances elsewhere along the coast or even in Barcelona, but there is no set programme.

## Classical, Opera & Baroque

Spain's contribution to the world of classical music has been modest, but Catalonia has produced a few exceptional composers. Best known is Camprodon-born Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909), a gifted pianist who later turned his hand to composition. Among his best-remembered works is the *Iberia* cycle.

Lleida's Enric Granados i Campiña (1867–1916) was another fine pianist. He established Barcelona's conservatorium in 1901 and composed a great many pieces for piano, including *Danzas Españolas, Cantos de la Juventud* and *Goyescas*.

Other Catalan composers and musicians of some note include Eduard Toldrà (1895–1962) and Frederic Mompou (1893–1987).

Montserrat Caballé is Barcelona's most successful voice. Born in Gràcia in 1933, the soprano made her debut in 1956 in Basel (Switzerland). Her home-town launch came four years later in the Gran Teatre del Liceu (p71). In 1965, she performed to wild acclaim at New York's Carnegie Hall and went on to become one of the world's finest 20th-century sopranos. Her daughter, Montserrat Martí, is also a singer and they occasionally appear together. Another fine Catalan soprano was Victoria de los Ángeles (1923–2005), while Catalonia's other world-class opera star is the renowned tenor Josep (José) Carreras (1946–).

Jordi Savall (1941–) has assumed the task of rediscovering a European heritage in music that predates the era of the classical greats. He and his wife, soprano Montserrat Figueras, have, along with musicians from other countries, have been largely responsible for resuscitating the beauties of medieval, Renaissance and baroque music. In 1987, Savall founded La Capella Reial de Catalunya and two years later he formed the baroque orchestra Le Concert des Nations. You can sometimes catch their recitals in locations such as the Església de Santa Maria del Mar (p83).

# CINEMA

In 1932 Francesc Macià, president of the Generalitat, opened Spain's first studios for making 'talkies' and a year later Metro Goldwyn Mayer had a dubbing studio in Barcelona. But since Franco's victory in 1939, pretty much all cinematic production has taken place in Madrid.

José Juan Bigas Luna (1946–) is one of Catalonia's best known directors, responsible for the hilarious *Jamón, Jamón* (1992). His latest flick, *Yo Soy la Juani* (I am Juani; 2006), takes us into the life of a modern young woman in the tough world of Barcelona's outer suburbs.

Ventura Pons (1945–) is a veteran of Catalan theatre and film-making who cranks out movies with almost frightening speed. *Barcelona (Un Mapa),* which came out in 2007, looks at six urban characters gathered together but essentially lonely in an Eixample apartment.

Gràcia-born Isabel Coixet (1960–) has had some ups and downs with some original films. She reached a high point (and four Goyas, the Spanish equivalent of the Oscars) for *Vida Secreta de las Palabras* (The Secret Life of Words; 2005), in which a taciturn nurse arrives on a moribund North Sea oil platform to take care of a burns patient. She turns out to be a torture victim of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

Despite his years, Vicente Aranda (1926–) remains prolific, making anything from the surprising and not altogether successful 2006 blockbuster based on the medieval classic tome, *Tirant Lo Blanc,* to his adaptation of Juan Marsé's *Canciones de Amor en el Lolita's Club* in 2007.

Vilanova i la Geltrú's Sergi López (1965–) has asserted himself as a prominent and versatile actor across Europe (especially in France) in films like Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002), a bizarre murder story set in the illegal immigrant scene in London. He plays a nasty fellow who meets an unpleasant end.

Barcelona's tourism folk have set up a website (www.barcelonamovie.com) with suggested walking tours taking in spots where various films have been shot in Barcelona. Print 'em out and follow in the footsteps of Almodóvar or Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, the unpleasant character of *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*.

### top picks

#### FILMS SHOT IN BARCELONA

- Perfume: The Story of a Murderer (Tom Tykwer; 2006) Starring Ben Wishaw as the psychopathic Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, this film is based on the extraordinary novel by Patrick Süsskind and is partly shot on locations across town and around Catalonia (including Girona, the Castell de Sant Ferran in Figueres and Tarragona).
- Vicky Cristina Barcelona (Woody Allen; 2008) – Barcelona was all agog in 2007 as Woody Allen, Scarlett Johansson, Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem wandered around shooting Allen's vision of Barcelona. Bardem's character, a painter, gets Cruz and Johansson all hot and sweaty in this light romantic romp.
- Todo Sobre Mi Madre (All About My Mother; Pedro Almodóvar; 1999) One of the Spanish director's most polished films, partly set in Barcelona. A quirky commentary that ties together the lives of the most improbable collection of women (including a couple of transsexuals).
- L'Auberge Espagnole (The Spanish Apartment; Cédric Klapisch; 2002) A young Parisian from the suburbs, Xavier, goes to Barcelona to learn Spanish for business. It ain't easy when university classes are given half the time in Catalan, but Xavier has no yen to return to Paris.
- El Taxista Ful (Jo Sol; 2005) Taxi driver José R lives on the edge, because the cabs he drives around Barcelona are stolen. Making a living isn't easy in the big city. Loosely based on a true story.

# THEATRE

Barcelona rivals Madrid as a centre of theatrical production in Spain. The bulk of dramatic theatre on Barcelona's stages is done in Catalan, whether local fringe stuff or interpretations of Ibsen and Shakespeare.

Several outstanding local theatre companies have a far wider appeal. One of the world's wackiest theatre companies is La Fura dels Baus (www.lafura.com). These guys turn theatre spaces (or warehouses, or boats…) into a kind of participatory apocalypse and can, as with their *Boris Gudonov* act in 2008, in which they turned their audiences into hostages in a terrorist situation, reach (or pass) the limits of what many might consider good taste. Tricicle (www.tricicle.com) is a three-man mime team easily enjoyed by anyone. Els Comediants (www.comediants.com) and La Cubana (www.lacubana.es) are highly successful comedy groups that owe a lot to the impromptu world of street theatre. Els Joglars (www.elsjoglars.com) are not afraid to create pieces full of social critique, while Dagoll Dagom (www.dagolldagom.com) is Catalonia's very own bells-and-whistles musical theatre company. Lavish and somewhat all-over-the-place performances are their speciality, with lots of kitschy high drama. They switch between home-grown material and original interpretations of Broadway classics.

See p218 for theatrical locations.

# DANCE

## Contemporary

Barcelona is the capital of contemporary dance in Spain, and Ramon Oller is the city's leading choreographer, working with one of the country's most established companies, Metros (www.metrosdansa.com), which he created in 1986. Its dance is rooted in a comparatively formal technique.

Other dance companies worth keeping an eye out for are Cesc Gelabert (www.gelabertazzopardi.com), run by the choreographer of the same name; Mudances (www.margarit-mudances.com), run by Àngels

### THE RETURN OF LA RUMBA

Back in the 1950s, a new sound mixing flamenco with Latin (salsa and other South American dance flavours) emerged in *gitano* (Roma people) circles in the bars of Gràcia and the Barri Gòtic. The main man was Antonio González, known as El Pescaílla (married to the flamenco star Lola Flores). The guy who took this eminently Barcelona style to a wider (eventually international) audience was Matarò-born *gitano* Peret. By the end of the 1970s, however, Rumba Catalana was running out of steam. Peret had turned to religion and El Pescaílla lived in Flores' shadow in Madrid. A plaque to the latter's memory graces Carrer Fraternitat 1, in Gràcia. But Buenos Aires–born Javier Patricio 'Gato' Pérez discovered Rumba in 1977 and gave it his own personal spin, bringing out several popular records, such as *Atalaya,* until the early 1980s. After Pérez, it seemed that Rumba was dead. Not so fast! New Rumba bands, often highly eclectic, have emerged in recent years. Papawa, Barrio Negro and El Tío Carlos are names to look out for. Others mix Rumba with anything from reggae to ragga. Melendi, from Asturias in Spain's north, has rocketed to national popularity with his mix of Rumba and rock and is the proof that, even beyond Barcelona, Rumba rocks!

Margarit; **Lanònima Imperial** (www.lanonima.com), run by Juan Carlos García; and **Mal Pelo** (www.malpelo.org), run by Maria Muñoz and Pep Ramis. All tend to work from a base of 'release technique', which favours 'natural' movement, working from the skeleton, over a reliance on muscular power. **Sol Picó** (www.solpico.com) is a younger company that does provocative dance sets on a big scale, while **Marta Carrasco** (www.martacarrasco.com) does dance that spills over more heavily into theatre. Butoh style aficionados should check out the work of Andrés Corchero and Rosa Muñoz.

## Flamenco

For those who think that the passion of flamenco is the preserve of the south, think again. The *gitanos* (Roma people) get around, and some of the big names of the genre come from Catalonia. They were already in Catalonia long before the massive migrations from the south of the 1960s, but with these waves came an exponential growth in flamenco bars as Andalucians sought to recreate a little bit of home.

First and foremost, one of the greatest *bailaoras* (flamenco dancers) of all time, Carmen Amaya (1913–63) was born in what is now Port Olímpic. She danced to her father's guitar in the streets and bars around La Rambla in pre-civil war years. Much to the bemusement of purists from the south, not a few flamenco stars today have at least trained in flamenco schools in Barcelona – dancers Antonio Canales (1962–) and Joaquín Cortés (1969–) are among them. Other Catalan stars of flamenco include *cantaores* (singers) Juan Cortés Duquende (1965–) and Miguel Poveda (1973–), a boy from Badalona. He took an original step in 2006 by releasing a flamenco album, *Desglaç,* in Catalan. Another interesting flamenco voice in Catalonia is Ginesa Ortega Cortés (1967–), actually born in France. She masters traditional genres ably but loves to experiment. In her 2002 album, *Por los Espejos del Agua* (Through the Water's Mirrors), she does a reggae version of flamenco and she has sung flamenco versions of songs by Joan Manuel Serrat and Billie Holliday.

An exciting combo formed in Barcelona in 1996 and which defies classification is the seven-man, one-woman group Ojos de Brujo (Wizard's Eyes), who meld flamenco and rumba (see above) with rap, ragga and electronic music. Their latest CD, *Techari,* is the smoothest and most exciting yet.

See p217 for information on where to see flamenco performances.

## Sardana

The Catalan dance *par excellence* is the *sardana,* whose roots lie in the far northern Empordà region of Catalonia. Compared with flamenco, it is sober indeed but not unlike a lot of other Mediterranean folk dances.

The dancers hold hands in a circle and wait for the 10 or so musicians to begin. The performance starts with the piping of the *flabiol,* a little wooden flute. When the other musicians join in, the dancers start – a series of steps to the right, one back and then the same to the left. As the music 'heats up' the steps become more complex, the leaps are higher and the dancers lift their arms. Then they return to the initial steps and continue. If newcomers wish to join in, space is made for them as the dance continues and the whole thing proceeds in a more or less seamless fashion.

For information on where and when to see locals indulging in their traditional two-step, see p218.







# ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING

A report published in 2007 claimed that, with an average 50 micrograms of toxic particles per cubic metre of air, Barcelona had a worse air pollution problem than such megalopolises as New York, Mexico City and Tokyo. The single biggest source (85%) of unhealthy air is private vehicles, although industry plays its part and, paradoxically, sea breezes don't help either.

In reaction, parking and traffic restrictions in central Barcelona have been tightened. In 2008 a speed limit of 80km/h throughout Barcelona and 16 surrounding municipalities (including on highways) was introduced with the aim of cutting emissions by 30% in the metropolitan area.

The city's buses are being progressively replaced by new models powered by compressed natural gas – more than 250 are in service. The city transport authority is experimenting with hydrogen fuel cell and hydrogen combustion powered buses, as well as with bio-diesel fuelled buses. This contribution to the reduction of air pollution is, in itself, minimal. Combined with growing density and efficiency of public transport networks that encourage people not to drive their own cars, however, it is hoped to make a real impact on the pollution problem in the long term.

Noise pollution is a problem, especially in parts of the old city (notably around El Born and in El Raval). Rowdy traffic, late-night rubbish collection, day-long construction and road works, and the screaming and shouting of revellers, all contribute to insomnia. Main roads are gradually getting a layer of noise-reduction asphalt to reduce traffic noise. But for many, double or even triple glazing is the only answer (not particularly comfortable in summer).

Although much depends on the goodwill of citizens, rubbish disposal is not too bad. Large, brightly coloured containers have been scattered about the city for the separated collection of paper, glass and cans, and they are emptied daily. Emptying is one thing, but the disposal of waste produced in Barcelona is a major problem. Some of it is transported as far off as Murcia, in southern Spain!

Every night the city streets are hosed down, but every day they wind up dirty again. Some areas (such as much of Ciutat Vella) are worse than others (such as l'Eixample). This does not exactly contribute to reducing water consumption, which at the time of writing was looking like one of Barcelona's bigger challenges. With Catalan dams at all-time lows (January 2008 was the hottest January on record), plans were enacted to import water by tanker or train from as far away as Almería and Marseille. Reports in 2008 estimated that, throughout Catalonia, about a quarter of water was lost through leakage on its way from distribution centres to end-users. A temporary reprieve from the drought came with heavy rains in May of that year, which took dams from 20% back to 50% of capacity. Some water had already been imported by boat but the sense of emergency had temporarily passed. A desalination plant is due to open in El Prat de Llobregat in 2009, and it is hoped that it will ease the long-term water problem by covering 20% of Barcelona's needs.

Barcelona gets a lot of sun and the huge photovoltaic panel at El Fòrum is symbolic of the city's stated intentions to increase solar energy output. Town bylaws require the installation of solar panels on new buildings of more than 12 apartments, although ecologists doubt this rule is being enforced.

## THE LAND

Barcelona spreads along the Catalan coast in what is known as the Pla de Barcelona (Barcelona Plain), midway between the French border and the regional frontier with Valencia. The plain

averages about 4m above sea level. Mont Tàber, the little elevation upon which the Romans built their town, is 16.9m above sea level. To the southwest, Montjuïc is 173m high.

Urban sprawl tends to be channelled southwest and northeast along the coast, as the landwards side is effectively blocked off by the Serralada Litoral mountain chain, which between the Riu Besòs and Riu Llobregat is known as the Serra de Collserola. Tibidabo is the highest point of this chain at 512m, with commanding views across the whole city.

Badalona to the northeast and L'Hospitalet to the southwest mark the municipal boundaries of the city – although, as you drive through them, you'd never know where they begin and end. To the north, the Riu Besòs (so successfully cleaned up in recent years that otters have been spotted in it for the first time since the 1970s!) in part marks the northern limits of the city. The Riu Llobregat, which rises in the Pyrenees, empties into the Mediterranean just south of L'Hospitalet. On the southern side of the river is El Prat de Llobregat and Barcelona's airport.

## GREEN BARCELONA

Serious concentrations of green are few and far between in Barcelona, but there are some exceptions. Closest to the town centre is the pleasant Parc de la Ciutadella.

The main green lung is Montjuïc, which rises behind the port. Extensive landscaped gardens surround the Olympic stadium, swimming pools, art galleries, museums, cemeteries and the fort, making it a wonderful spot for walks.

The city is bordered to the west by the Serra de Collserola, which serves as another smog filter and is laced with walks and bicycle paths. Declared a Natural Park in September 2006, it has for years been under pressure from urban development (much of it illegal) around and in it. In 2008 the town hall announced plans to limit further construction and, in some cases, to tear down existing, illegal residences. That said, the same town hall has enthusiastically backed the construction of a giant roller coaster in the Parc d'Atraccions, to the consternation of some neighbours.

About 35% of the trees that line Barcelona's streets and parks are plane trees. Others include acacias and nettle trees.

## URBAN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

The eminent British architect and town planner, Lord Richard Rogers, declared in 2000 that Barcelona was 'perhaps the most successful city in the world in terms of urban regeneration'.

That process, which got under way in earnest with the 1992 Olympic Games, thunders ahead. No sooner is one area given a new look, than another becomes the subject of modernisation.

Development continues at the mini-Manhattan that is the Diagonal Mar project on the northeast stretch of coast. A great chunk of El Poblenou (117 blocks to be precise), once an industrial and warehouse zone, is slowly being converted into a hi-tech business district, dubbed 22@bcn, or 22@ for short. Although take-up of office space by such cutting edge firms has been slow to date, the 22@ development was hailed by the CNBC European Business magazine in 2008 as one of the best urban renewal projects in Europe.

To the north, the Sagrera area will be transformed by the new high-speed railway station and transport interchange, while the completion of the giant new trade fair area, a single giant justice and courts complex, and nearby office complexes along Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes in L'Hospital de Llobregat and in the Zona Franca is transforming the area between central Barcelona and the airport. For more on landmark buildings in these areas, see p51.

Further funds have been released for the renovation of the city centre. Slowly, parts of the Barri Gòtic, La Ribera and El Raval that were depressed and abandoned have been or are being brought back to life. In El Raval a new boulevard, La Rambla del Raval, was opened in 2001 and is finally attracting attention. The streets around it remain dodgy, but plans are in place for a new hotel (designed by local doyen of architecture Oriol Bohigas) and shopping complex. Further north, the emblematic Macba and CCCB arts centres, both opened in 1995 in part of the effort to renew the upper half of El Raval, have since been joined by the new home of the Universitat de Barcelona's Philosophy, Geography and History faculties (Map pp108–9). Many other depressed parts of the city (such as the densely populated hillock area of El Carmel) have been singled out for major improvements in the coming years too. No-one can say that Barcelona is resting on its laurels.







# GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

The Generalitat de Catalunya (the regional Catalan government) was resurrected by royal decree in 1977. Its power as an autonomous government is enshrined in the statutes of the Spanish constitution of 1978, and by the Estatut d'Autonomia (devolution statute). The Govern (executive) is housed in the Palau de la Generalitat on Plaça de Sant Jaume. The Generalitat has wide powers over matters such as education, health, trade, industry, tourism and agriculture.

The Ajuntament (town hall) stands opposite the Palau de la Generalitat in Plaça de St Jaume and has traditionally been a Socialist haven. Never has the Socialists' hold on city government been so tenuous. Since the 2007 municipal elections, Jordi Hereu has led a minority government with the Greens, totalling 18 seats (three shy of an absolute majority). Opposition comes from the moderately right-wing Catalan nationalist CiU coalition under Xavier Trias (12 seats), their independence-minded left-wing counterparts ERC (Jordi Portabella), with four seats, and the PP with seven slots. For more on the recent machinations at city and regional level, see p31.

Elections to the Ajuntament and Generalitat take place every four years. They are free and by direct universal suffrage. The members of each house then vote for the president of the Generalitat and the mayor.

Barcelona is divided into 10 *districtes municipals* (municipal districts), each with its own *ajuntament*.

# MEDIA

Much of the Spanish media makes little effort to hide its political affiliations. The respected national daily, *El País,* born out of the early days of democracy in the 1970s, is closely aligned to the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party). Many Catalans find its political coverage overwhelmingly biased towards that party. *ABC,* on the other hand, is a long-standing organ of the conservative right and readily identified with the Partido Popular. Similarly hawkish is *El Mundo*.

Catalans, by their choice of paper, make political statements. Reading the local Spanish-language and slightly conservative *La Vanguardia* is a clear vote for local product, while *Avui,* a loss-maker that is backed by the Generalitat, is stridently Catalan nationalist.

It is little different in the electronic media. While they sometimes have interesting programming, the most important local stations, such as the Catalan government's TV-3 and Canal 33, push an almost constant Catalanist line. Documentaries on the civil war, the horrors of the Franco period and so forth abound, while investigative journalism on some of the dodgier sides of Catalan government since 1980 are noticeable by their absence.

# FASHION

For years, Barcelona and Madrid ran competing *haute couture* shows but the end came in 2006 when the Generalitat pulled the plug on funding. Alternative shows were staged in 2007, but by 2008 it was all over.

But it was not all bad news. The Bread and Butter urban wear fashion show, which was born in Berlin in 2000 and in 2005–06 was staged in both cities, moved definitively to Barcelona in 2007.

### MUCHO GUSTO, MR CUSTO

Custo (actually Custodio Dalmau) and his brother David, from Lleida and now based in Barcelona, have become hot fashion property since breaking into the tough US women's fashion market in the early 2000s. Indeed, the light and breezy brand has become something of a cult obsession with women around the world. Their ever-cosmopolitan, inventive and often provocative mix of colours, especially in their hallmark tops, are miles away from the more conservative, classic fashion tastes that still dominate some sectors of Barcelona high society.

The city teems with its own designers. Names range from the ebullient Custo Barcelona (a hit on New York's catwalks) to the international *prêt-a-porter* phenomenon of Mango. Based outside the city in the Vallès area, it has more than 900 stores throughout the world (in locations as far-flung as Vietnam and London's Oxford St), and has come a long way since opening its first store on Passeig de Gràcia in 1984. Mango is one of Spain's largest textile exporters, specialising mainly in women's fashion.

Other local design names worth keeping an eye out for include Joaquim Verdú, who has been making men's and women's clothes since 1977; Antonio Miró, who designed the Spanish team's uniforms for the 1992 Olympic Games and also does a line in furniture; David Valls, Josep Font, Armand Basi, Purificación García, Konrad Muhr, Josep Abril, Sita Murt and TCN. Along with the Dalmau brothers of Custo Barcelona, another runaway renegade is Uruguay-born but Barcelona-bred Jordi Labanda. Better known in his earlier days as a cartoonist and illustrator (the cheerful Sandwich&Friends fast food outlets are gaily decorated with his distinctive, bright, clear-cut urban murals), he was propelled to international fame and fortune as a fashion designer after moving to New York in 1995 and, after publishing illustrations in the *New York Times*, switching his pen to hip women's design.

With so much talent popping up around them, it is hardly surprising that Barcelonins like to dress with such style – they have no shortage of outlets in which to hunt down offerings from their favourite designers. The city's premier shopping boulevards, Passeig de Gràcia, Rambla de Catalunya and Avinguda Diagonal, are lined with the best of both international and Spanish rag-trade fashion labels. If l'Eixample is the brand-happy shopping mecca for fashion victims, there's plenty more in the old town. Both the Barri Gòtic and La Ribera are peppered with boutiques which sport all sorts of youthful fashion, apparently unfettered by convention or macroeconomic considerations. Conversely, if it's grunge and secondhand clothing you're after, we highly recommend heading for Carrer de la Riera Baixa in El Raval.

## WAR OF WORDS

Since Barcelona was crushed in the War of the Spanish Succession in 1714, the use of Catalan has been repeatedly banned or at least frowned upon. Franco was the last of Spain's rulers to clamp down on its public use.

People in the country and small towns largely ignored the bans, but intellectual circles in Barcelona and other cities only 'rediscovered' Catalan with the Renaixença at the end of the 19th century (see p27). Franco loosened the reins from the 1960s on, but all education in Catalan schools remained exclusively in Spanish until after the dictator's demise in 1975.

Since the first autonomous regional parliament was assembled in 1980, the Generalitat (Catalan government) has waged an unstinting campaign of *normalització lingüística* (linguistic normalisation). The Generalitat reckons 95% of the population in Catalonia understand Catalan and nearly 70% speak it. In Valencia, about half the population speak it, as do 65% in the Balearic Islands. The big problem is that not nearly as many write it. Even in Catalonia, only about 40% of the population write Catalan satisfactorily.

In Catalonia today it is impossible to get a public-service job without fluency in Catalan. And just as Franco had all signs in Catalan replaced, Spanish road signs and advertising are now harder to find. On the other hand, dubbing of films into Catalan is nearly non-existent and studies show that adolescents mostly watch Spanish-language TV. In 2008 the regional government decided to pour €2.4 million into the promotion of dubbing films in Catalan and €36 million into subsidies to encourage the production of Catalan-language movies.

The Catalan schooling model, in which all subjects are generally taught in Catalan (although Spanish is frequently the main vehicle of communication between kids in the playground), has drawn praise from the European Commission, which sees it as a successful model for the preservation of Catalan. It has also attracted venom from the right-wing Partido Popular, which claims Spanish is being driven underground. Depending on who you ask, both languages are on the edge of extinction! In fact, both are probably perfectly safe.

The media play a key role in the diffusion and preservation of Catalan and complex content rules mean that certain radio and TV stations must include a minimum fixed percentage of programming in Catalan (including even music played). On certain chat programmes you'll occasionally strike hosts speaking Catalan, with their interlocutors answering in Spanish.

The Catalan government hailed the decision in 2005 allowing the use (albeit not obligatory) of Catalan in EU institutions as 'historic'.



# LANGUAGE

Barcelona is a bilingual city. The mother tongue of born-and-bred locals is Catalan, which belongs to the group of Western European languages that grew out of Latin (Romance languages), including Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. By the 12th century, it was a clearly established language with its own nascent literature. The language was most closely related to *langue d'oc*, the southern French derivative of Latin that was long the principal tongue in Gallic lands. The most conspicuous survivor of *langue d'oc* is the now little-used Provençal. Catalan followed its speakers' conquests and was introduced to the Balearic Islands and Valencia. It is also spoken in parts of eastern Aragón, and was for a while carried as far afield as Sardinia (where it still survives, just, in Alghero).

Alongside Catalan, Spanish is also an official (and for many non-Catalans the only) language. It is probably fair to say that Spanish is the first language of more people in the greater Barcelona area than Catalan. For more information, see the Language chapter on p282.

# ARCHITECTURE

How odd that the many weird and wonderful buildings that attract planeloads of tourists to Barcelona every day barely raised an eyebrow until the 1990s. As seaside tourism took off in Spain from the 1960s, Barcelona was ignored. The bulk of its Modernista (Catalan Art Nouveau) masterpieces lay buried under decades of grime, neglected by locals and unknown to outsiders. Business-minded Barcelona was sitting on a goldmine, but nobody realised it.

Gaudí was vaguely known for his unfinished architectural symphony, La Sagrada Família. But no-one gave a fig for La Pedrera, his gracefully curvaceous piece of whimsy on Passeig de Gràcia.

How things have changed. Gaudí stood at the pinnacle of Modernisme, which since the 1992 Olympic Games has been rediscovered for the burst of joyous creativity its architects brought to construction in Barcelona from the late 1800s to the 1920s.

The Modernistas produced an extraordinary opus. Barcelona's last such building boom had come at the height of the Middle Ages, when its great Gothic churches, mansions and shipyards were raised, together creating what survives to this day as one of the most extensive Gothic old city centres in Europe.

Although the medieval wrecking balls put paid to most of it, there was architecture before Gothic. On the site of the original Roman town rose a busy centre full of Romanesque monuments. Some evidence of both periods can still be admired.

## ROMAN REMNANTS

What Caesar Augustus and friends called Barcino was a standard Roman rectangular (more or less) town. The forum lay about where Plaça de Sant Jaume is and the whole place covered little more than 10 hectares.

There remain some impressive leftovers of the 4th-century walls that once comprised 70 towers. In the basement of the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat (p67) you can inspect parts of a tower and the wall, as well as a whole chunk of the Roman town unearthed during excavations. On the edge of what was the forum stand stout columns of the temple raised for emperor worship, the Temple Romà d'Augusti (p72). A little further north along what was once one of the roads leading out of the Roman town, sarcophagi of modest Roman tombs (p72) are visible.

## ROMANESQUE

Little remains of Barcelona's Romanesque past – largely swept aside to make way for what were considered greater Gothic spectacles. A tour through northern Catalonia should more than satisfy your curiosity as to what form the Catalan version of this first great wave of Christian–European architecture took.

Lombard artisans from northern Italy first introduced the Romanesque style of building to Catalonia. It is characterised by a pleasing simplicity. Churches tended to be austere, angular constructions, with tall, square-based bell towers. There were a few notable concessions to the curve – almost always semicircular or semicylindrical. These included the barrel vaulting inside the churches, the apse (or apses).

The main portal and windows are invariably topped with simple arches. If builders were feeling daring, they might adorn the main entrance with several arches within one another. From the late 11th century, stonemasons began to fill the arches with statuary.

In Barcelona you can see only a few Romanesque remnants. In La Catedral the 13th-century Capella de Santa Llúcia (p67) survives, along with part of the cloister doors. The 12th-century former Benedictine Església de Sant Pau del Camp (p80) is also a good example, especially the cloisters.

The counterpoint to Romanesque architecture was the art used to decorate churches and monasteries built in the style. Contrary to popular belief, these buildings were not bare stone, but gaily painted inside and out. Barcelona is the place to see this art, as the best of Romanesque frescoes from around Catalonia are preserved in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (p139).





## GOTHIC GRANDEUR

This soaring style took off in France in the 13th century and spread across Europe. Its emergence coincided with Jaume I's march into Valencia and the annexation of Mallorca and Ibiza, accompanied by the rise and rise of a trading class and a burgeoning mercantile empire. The enormous cost of building the grand new monuments could thus be covered by the steady increase in the city's wealth.

The style of architecture reflected the development of building techniques. The introduction of buttresses, flying buttresses and ribbed vaulting in ceilings allowed engineers to raise edifices that were loftier and seemingly lighter than ever before. The pointed arch became standard and great rose windows were the source of light inside these enormous spaces. Think about the hovels that labourers on such projects lived in and the primitive nature of building materials available, and you get an idea of the awe such churches, once completed, must have inspired. They were not built in a day. It took more than 160 years, a fairly typical time frame, to finish La Catedral (p61). Its rival, the Església de Santa Maria del Mar (p83), was one for the record books, taking only 59 years to build.

Catalan Gothic did not follow the same course as the style typical of northern Europe. Decoration here tends to be more sparing and the most obvious defining characteristic is the triumph of breadth over height. While northern European cathedrals reach for the sky, Catalan Gothic has a tendency to push to the sides, stretching its vaulting design to the limit.

The Saló del Tinell (p68), with a parade of 15m arches (among the largest ever built without reinforcement) holding up the roof, is a perfect example of Catalan Gothic. Another is the present home of the Museu Marítim, the Drassanes (p78), Barcelona's medieval shipyards. In their churches, too, the Catalans opted for a more robust shape and lateral space – step into the Església de Santa Maria del Mar or the Església de Santa Maria del Pi (p70) and you'll soon get the idea.

Another notable departure from what you might have come to expect of Gothic north of the Pyrenees is the lack of spires and pinnacles. Bell towers tend to terminate in a flat or nearly flat roof. Occasional exceptions prove the rule – the main façade of Barcelona's Catedral, with its three gnarled and knobbly spires, does vaguely resemble the outline that confronts you in cathedrals in Chartres or Cologne. But then it was a 19th-century addition, admittedly to a medieval design.

Perhaps the single greatest building spurt came under Pere III. This is odd in a sense because, as Dickens might have observed, it was not only the best of times, but also the worst. By the mid-14th century, when Pere III was in command, Barcelona had been pushed to the ropes by a series of disasters: famine, repeated plagues and pogroms.

Maybe he didn't notice. He built, or began to build, much of La Catedral, the Drassanes, the Llotja stock exchange, the Saló del Tinell, the Casa de la Ciutat (which now houses the town hall) and numerous lesser buildings, not to mention part of the city walls. The churches of Santa Maria del Pi and Santa Maria del Mar were completed by the end of the 14th century.

### top picks

#### BARCELONA ARCHITECTURE BOOKS

- **Barcelona Architecture & Design** (Jürgen Forster) A handy guide to all sorts of buildings, parks, designer hotels and restaurants for the contemporary design lover.
- **Catalunya: Guía de la Arquitectura Moderna 1880–2007** (Col.legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya) An exhaustive presentation (available in English) of modern Catalan architecture in and beyond Barcelona.
- **El Gòtic Català** (Francesca Español) Full of photos, this is as close to a specialised look at Catalan Gothic building as you'll find (in Catalan).
- **Gaudí: The Man & His Work** (Joan Masso Bergos) A beautifully illustrated study of the man and his architecture, based on the writings of one of his confidants.
- **La Ruta del Modernisme** (Published by Barcelona Town Hall) An extensive guide to 115 Modernista buildings across the city. It comes with discounted entry to many sights.
- **Gaudí** (Gijs van Hensbergen) A nicely crafted biography of one of architecture's most extraordinary yet elusive characters.

### OH, HOW AWFULLY GOTHIC!

The lofty Gothic buildings of medieval Europe inspire awe in their modern visitors. But as early as the 16th century, when Renaissance artists and architects turned to the clean lines of Classical Antiquity for inspiration, all things medieval looked crude, rough and, well, frankly barbarian, just like the ancient Germanic tribes of Goths that had stormed across Europe centuries before. To label something Gothic became the ultimate insult. This attitude spread across Europe. In Barcelona, many private homes built in Gothic style would get a baroque make-over later, but thankfully most of the major monuments were left alone. Not until the 19th century did this extraordinary heritage again awaken admiration, to such an extent that in some north European countries in particular it led to a wave of Gothic revival building.

Gothic had a longer use-by date in Barcelona than in many other European centres. By the early 15th century, the Generalitat still didn't have a home worthy of its name, and architect Marc Safont set to work on the present building on Plaça de Sant Jaume (p69). Even renovations carried out a century later were largely in the Gothic tradition, although some Renaissance elements eventually snuck in – the façade on Plaça de Sant Jaume is a rather disappointing result.

Carrer de Montcada (p83), in La Ribera, was the result of a late-medieval act of town planning. Eventually, mansions belonging to the moneyed classes of 15th- and 16th-century Barcelona were erected along it. Many now house museums and art galleries. Although these former mansions appear forbidding on the outside, their interiors often reveal another world, of pleasing courtyards and decorated external staircases. They mostly went through a gentle baroque make-over in later years.

Most of Barcelona's Gothic heritage lies within the boundaries of Ciutat Vella but a few examples can be found beyond, notably the Museu-Monestir de Pedralbes (p124) in Sarrià.

## RENAISSANCE TO NEOCLASSICISM

The strong Barcelonin affection for Gothic, coupled with a decline in the city's fortunes that slowed urban development, seems to have largely closed Barcelona to the Renaissance and baroque periods that blossomed elsewhere in Europe (and elsewhere in Spain). The handful of examples of baroque in Barcelona are generally decorative rather than structural.

Among the more important but restrained baroque constructions are the Església de la Mercè (p73), home to the medieval sculpture of Mare del Déu de la Mercè (Our Lady of Mercy; Barcelona's co-patron with Santa Eulàlia); the Església de Sant Felip Neri (p73); and the Jesuits' Església de Betlem (p61), largely destroyed in the civil war and since rebuilt. Also worth a look is the courtyard of the Palau de Dalmases (p83), in Carrer de Montcada, which has been reworked from the original Gothic structure.

The Palau de la Virreina (p61), just across Carrer del Carme from the Església de Betlem, is, depending on which expert you read, a rococo or neoclassical building raised in the 1770s. If anything, it is hybrid. More definitely neoclassical and built around the same time is Palau Moja (p61), across La Rambla.

## THE MODERNISTAS

The urban expansion programme known as l'Eixample (the Enlargement), designed to free the choking population from the city's bursting medieval confines, coincided with a blossoming of unfettered thinking in the arts. Nowhere was this more apparent than in architecture. The feverish speculation that took place on the land opened up between Barcelona and Gràcia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries ensured architects had plenty of work. What the developers could not have predicted was the calibre of those architects.

Leading the way was Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (1852–1926). Born in Reus and initially trained in metalwork, he obtained his architecture degree in 1878. Gaudí personifies, and largely transcends, a movement that brought a thunderclap of innovative greatness to an otherwise middle-ranking European city. This startling wave of creativity subsided as quickly – the bulk of the Modernistas' work was done from the 1880s to about 1910.







Modernisme did not appear in isolation in Barcelona. To the British and French the style was Art Nouveau; to the Italians, Lo Stile Liberty; the Germans called it Jugendstil (Youth Style); and the Austrians, Sezession (Secession). Its vitality and rebelliousness can be summed up in those epithets: modern, new, liberty, youth and secession. A key uniting element was the sensuous curve, implying movement, lightness and vitality. This leitmotif informed much Art Nouveau thinking, in part inspired by long-standing tenets of Japanese art.

For all that, there is something misleading about the name Modernisme. It suggests 'out with the old, in with the new'. In a sense, nothing could be further from the truth. From Gaudí down, Modernista architects looked to the past for inspiration. Gothic, Islamic and Renaissance design all had something to offer. At its most playful, Modernisme was able to intelligently flout the rulebooks of these styles and create exciting new cocktails. Even many of the materials used by the Modernistas were traditional – the innovation came in their application.

As many as 2000 buildings in Barcelona and throughout Catalonia display some Modernista traces. And Gaudí and his contemporaries also undertook a handful of projects beyond Catalonia. Everything from rich bourgeois mansion blocks to churches, from hospitals to factories, went up in this 'style', a word too constraining to adequately describe the flamboyant breadth of eclecticism inherent in it.

It is one thing to have at hand an architect of genius – it is still more remarkable that several others of considerable talent should have been working at the same time. But the proliferation of their work was due, above all, to the availability of hard cash – as with most great artists, genius required muse and patron. Gaudí and friends had no shortage of orders. The l'Eixample urban expansion project provided a virgin playing field where, potentially, anything went. As the landmark efforts of Gaudí and co went up and their owners preened themselves with pride at their own startling modernity, a cash-rich keeping-up-with-the-Joneses chain reaction took place. For a couple of decades, there probably wasn't an architect worth his salt in Barcelona who didn't try his hand at a little inspired innovation in order to satisfy clients.

## AFTER MODERNISME

As quickly as the fad had gathered pace, so it was swept aside. By the time Gaudí died in 1926, he had been left behind and alone in his creative 'craziness'. In the aftermath of WWI especially, Modernisme seemed stale, self-indulgent and somehow unwholesome.

While other movements replaced Modernisme in fine arts and literature, architecture took a nose dive. From the 1920s until the civil war, a host of sober neoclassical and neo-baroque edifices went up. A wander along Via Laietana provides plenty of examples. At the same time, the 1930s was a period of timid experimentation inspired by the Bauhaus school of thought. Surprising angular, utilitarian blocks of flats and public buildings popped up in ad hoc fashion around the city. The occasional flash of Art Deco caprice added a touch of interest.

In the aftermath of the civil war there was little money, time or willingness for architectural fancywork. Apartment blocks and offices, designed with a realism and utilitarianism that to most people now seem deadly dull, were erected. One of the greatest urban-planning crimes was the erection of the incredibly ugly town hall office block just behind the Ajuntament, smack in the middle of the oldest part of the city. In the opening years of the 21st century, the top few floors were gingerly dismantled.

The 1960s and 1970s were the years of sprawl, when rank upon rank of anonymous apartment blocks were planted like corn crops across great swathes of peripheral Barcelona to absorb waves of migration from across Spain. A lot of it ain't pretty, as a drive through l'Hospitalet or along Avinguda de la Meridiana will confirm.

There were occasional highlights. In 1971, Barcelona's Josep Lluís Sert (1902–83) built the light, white Fundació Joan Miró (p143) on Montjuïc.

## BARCELONA TODAY

Barcelona's latest architectural revolution began in the 1980s. The appointment then of Oriol Bohigas (1925–) as head of urban planning by the ruling socialist party marked a new beginning (he was regarded as an elder statesman for architecture). The city set about its biggest phase of renewal since the heady days of l'Eixample in the late 19th century.

## THE MEN WHO MADE MODERNISME

Gaudí and the two architects who most closely followed him in talent, Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1850–1923) and Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867–1957), were all Catalan nationalists. Puig i Cadafalch, in fact, was a senior politician and president of the Catalan Mancomunitat (a shadow parliament that demanded Catalan autonomy) from 1916 to 1923.

The political associations are significant, as Modernisme became a means of expression for Catalan identity. It barely touched the rest of Spain; where it did, one frequently finds the involvement of Catalan architects.

A quick comparison of work by Gaudí, Domènech i Montaner and Puig i Cadafalch is enough to illustrate the difficulty in defining what exactly constitutes Modernisme. It is marked, if anything, by its rule-breaking eclecticism.

As Gaudí became more adventurous he appeared as a lone wolf. With age he became almost exclusively motivated by stark religious conviction and devoted much of the latter part of his life to what remains Barcelona's call sign – the unfinished La Sagrada Família (p104). His inspiration in the first instance was Gothic. But he also sought to emulate the harmony he observed in nature. Straight lines were out. The forms of plants and stones were in. Gaudí used complex string models weighted with plumb lines to make his calculations (you can see examples in the upstairs mini-museum in La Pedrera, p106). The architect's work is at once a sublime reaching-out to the heavens, and yet an earthy appeal to sinewy movement.

This is as much the case in La Sagrada Família as in other key works, like La Pedrera and Casa Batlló (p107), where all appears a riot of the unnaturally natural, or the naturally unnatural. Not only are straight lines eliminated, but the lines between real and unreal, sober and dream-drunk, 'good sense' and play are all blurred.

For contrast, look from Casa Batlló to Puig i Cadafalch's Casa Amatller (p107) next door, where the straight line is very much in evidence. This architect also looked to the past (observe the fanciful Gothic-style sculpture) and to foreign influence (the gables are borrowed from the Dutch), and created a house of startling beauty and invention. Domènech i Montaner, too, looked into the Gothic past. He never simply copied, as shown by the Castell dels Tres Dragons – built as a café-restaurant for the Universal Exhibition in 1888 and now home to the Museu de Zoologia (p88) or the Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau (p111). In these buildings, Domènech i Montaner put his own spin on the past, in both decoration and structure. In the case of the Castell dels Tres Dragons, the main windows are more of a neoclassical borrowing, and Islamic touches can be made out in the detail.

### Materials & Decoration

Modernista architects relied on the skills of artisans that have now been all but relegated to history. There were no concrete pours (contrary to what is being done at La Sagrada Família today). Stone, unclad brick, exposed iron and steel frames, and copious use of stained glass and ceramics in decoration, were all features of the new style – and indeed it is often in the décor that Modernisme is at its most flamboyant.

The craftsmen required for these tasks were the heirs of the guild masters and had absorbed centuries of know-how about just what could and could not be done with these materials. Forged iron and steel were newcomers to the scene, but the approach to learning how they could be used was not dissimilar to that adopted for more traditional materials. Gaudí, in particular, relied on these old skills and even ran schools in La Sagrada Família workshops to keep them alive.

Iron came into its own in this period. Nowhere is this more evident than in Barcelona's great covered markets: Mercat de la Boqueria (p61), Mercat de Sant Antoni and Mercat de la Llibertat (p119), just to name the main ones. Their grand metallic vaults not only provided shade over the produce, but were also a proclamation both of Barcelona's dynamism and the success of 'ignoble' materials in grand building.

The Rome-trained sculptor Eusebi Arnau (1864–1934) was one of the most popular figures called upon to decorate Barcelona's Modernista piles. The appearance of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau is one of his legacies and he also had a hand in the Palau de la Música Catalana (p87) and Casa Amatller.

### Digging For Modernista Gems

Barcelona has plenty of Modernista traces. All of the major Modernista buildings are discussed in more detail in the Neighbourhoods chapter (p56). The city has organised a **Ruta del Modernisme** (www.rutadelModernisme.com), a planned route that takes you to the major sights and many lesser known ones; see p113 for details. Tourist offices can provide pamphlets and other material on a great range of Modernista sights. Many Modernista buildings are private houses and/or offices and cannot be entered.

In the run-up to the 1992 Olympics, more than 150 architects beavered away on almost 300 building and design projects. The Port Vell waterfront was transformed with the creation of the Maremàgnum shopping and entertainment complex (p159). The long road to resurrecting Montjuïc took off with the refurbishment of the Olympic stadium and the creation of landmarks like Arata Isozaki's (1931–) Palau Sant Jordi (p145) and Santiago Calatrava's (1951–) Torre Calatrava (p145).

The Port Olímpic area was also transformed, with the creation of a marina and two skyscrapers, one arguably still Barcelona's hottest hotel, the Hotel Arts (p235).

In the hangover after 1992, landmark buildings still went up in strategic spots. Rarely was one built without the ulterior motive of trying to pull the surrounding area up by its bootstraps. One of the most emblematic of these projects is the gleaming white, undulating Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (Macba; p79), which opened in 1995.

Ricard Bofill's (1939–) team designed the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (p219) – a mix of neoclassical and modern design. Across the road, the l'Auditori (p217) was designed by Madrid-based Rafael Moneo (1937–). Though not the prettiest of buildings, it has become one of the city's top venues for classical music.

Henry Cobb's (1926–) World Trade Center, at the tip of a quay jutting out into the waters of Port Vell, is like a cruise ship ready to weigh anchor. With its offices, luxury hotel and restaurant, it is an attractive port-side business hub.

One of the biggest recent projects is Diagonal Mar. A whole district has been built (work continues) in the northeast coastal corner of the city where before there was a void. High-rise apartments, waterfront office towers and five-star hotels – among them the as yet unfinished Hotel Habitat Sky (Map pp98–9) by Dominique Perrault, one of two towers by the Frenchman in the area – mark this new district. There's also a sprawling shopping centre and two key structures. One is the blue, triangular Edifici Fòrum (p97) by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron. The other is Josep Lluís Mateo's (1949–) Centre de Convencions Internacional de Barcelona (CCIB; p97), a huge convention centre. Add a tree-lined marina, the future waterfront zoo, swimming areas, green zones along the nearby Riu Besòs and a new marina across the river in Sant Adrià del Besòs and the extent of the project becomes clear.

The most visible addition to the skyline came in 2005. The shimmering, cucumber-shaped Torre Agbar (p96) is a product of the imagination of French architect Jean Nouvel (1945–), a big step in the regeneration of the area around Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes in the city's northeast.

Southwest, on the way to the airport, the new Fira 2 trade fair along Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes (see p44) will by 2009 be marked by two landmark twisting towers (one a hotel, the other offices) designed by Japanese star architect and confessed Gaudí fan, Toyo Ito (1941–). The jellyfish-like entrance to the new fairgrounds is especially eye-catching. Nearby, Arata Isozaki has contributed a building to the business park development known as D38, on Passeig de la Zona Franca. Lord Richard Rogers (1933–), long an admirer of Barcelona's systematic architectural reinvention of itself, had a hand in the process with the landmark business hotel, Hesperia Tower, in L'Hospitalet, virtually over the road from Ito's towers. It is topped by a flying saucer–shaped restaurant run by Santi Santamaria (see p255).

The heart of La Ribera got a fresh look with its brand-new Mercat de Santa Caterina (p87). The market is quite a sight, with its wavy ceramic roof and tubular skeleton, designed by one

## top picks

### NOTABLE BUILDINGS

- **Casa Amatller** (p107) Puig i Cadafalch's Modernista–Gothic romp has a Dutch air about it.
- **Casa Batlló** (p107) Gaudí renovated this block of flats to make it look like a sinewy deep-sea beast.
- **Edifici Fòrum** (p97) A strange blue triangle hovers by the beach like an enormous UFO.
- **Església de Santa Maria del Mar** (p83) Broad and noble, and constructed in record time, this is Barcelona's proudest Gothic church.
- **Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau** (p111) With its dainty pavilions, ceramic décor and gardens, this hospital works artistic as well as medical wonders.
- **La Pedrera** (p106) Its detractors called it 'the quarry' for its wavy stone structure.
- **La Sagrada Família** (p104) Gaudí's unfinished masterpiece is still in construction.
- **Palau de la Música Catalana** (p87) This Modernista caprice is home to Catalan music.
- **Pavelló Mies van der Rohe** (p145) A touch of interwar German new wave building brought back to life.
- **Torre Agbar** (p96) Jean Nouvel's multicoloured cucumber illuminates Barcelona's night sky.

of the most promising names in Catalan architecture until his premature death, Enric Miralles (1955–2000). Miralles' Edifici de Gas Natural, a 100m glass tower near the waterfront in La Barceloneta, is extraordinary for its mirror-like surface and weirdly protruding adjunct buildings, which could be giant glass cliffs bursting from the main tower's flank. The nearby beachside Parc de Recerca Biomèdica de Barcelona (PRBB, Barcelona Biomedical Research Park), designed by Manel Brullet and Albert de la Pineda, is running as a European centre of research excellence. Its central building, just back from the beach, is an eye-catching elliptical affair.

## ...AND BARCELONA TOMORROW

Planned but with an uncertain finishing date is the complete overhaul of the Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes roundabout and surrounding area (the Torre Agbar represents a startling debut, and other towers are springing up nearby). The area will be transformed in a series of projects by MBM (Martorell, Bohigas & Mackey). Their design museum, which will contain several of the city's collections, is a daring project that looks something like a tip-truck. Beneath the roundabout they will create a Cripta del Tresor (Treasure Crypt) as part of the museum space. Zaha Hadid (1950–) will chime in with her redesign of Plaça de les Arts in front of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. Hadid has designed another characteristically novel building, which will look like so many rectangular dinner plates stacked in precarious fashion and serve as the campus of the Universitat del Llevant in the Fòrum area. In the same vicinity, the national telecommunications company, Telefónica, will get a daring new sliver of a skyscraper headquarters for its Catalonia operations, designed by Enric Massip-Bosch. Elsewhere in the nascent hi-tech zone of 22@, a giant cube of a building with partly inflatable façade (to reduce energy consumption) will be part of the Parc Barcelona Mèdia multimedia complex, and is due to open in late 2009.

Further away from the centre, in the much-neglected (until now) district of La Sagrera, construction of a major transport interchange for the high-speed AVE train from Madrid, metro and buses will be complemented by a characteristically out-there project from Frank Gehry (1929–). He will finally get to leave a more substantial mark on the city than his Peix sculpture at the Port Olímpic, with five twisting steel and glass towers that will feature a large degree of solar energy self-sufficiency.

Meanwhile, Lord Richard Rogers is busy transforming the former Les Arenes bullring on Plaça d'Espanya into a singular, circular leisure complex, with shops, cinemas, jogging track (!) and more. The complex renovation that aims to maintain the façade is due for completion by the end of 2008.

Not to be left out, Sir Norman Foster won the design competition for FC Barcelona's planned new-look Camp Nou stadium in 2007. The overhaul will create a kind of glow-in-the-dark sponge cake affair and is planned for completion in 2012. FC Barcelona's rival team, Espanyol, is also to get a new stadium, considerably less spectacular, outside the Barcelona municipality in Cornellà.

Local boy Ricardo Bofill is creating an 88m spinnaker-shaped hotel (Hotel W, owned by the Starwood chain) right on the Mediterranean shoreline at the southern end of the Barceloneta beaches. It is due to open in 2009. Bofill, who has handled much of the restructuring of the city's airport down the years, also designed the new south terminal.