

Barcelona



Dazzling pearl of the Mediterranean, Barcelona is Spain's most cosmopolitan city. Restaurants, bars and clubs are always packed, as is the seaside in summer. You might get the impression that Barcelona is dedicated exclusively to hedonism, but it is a hard-working, dynamic place.

Set on a plain rising gently from the sea to a range of wooded hills, Barcelona is one of the Mediterranean's busiest ports and hopes to place itself in the vanguard of 21st-century Europe with a heavy concentration of hi-tech and biomedical business.

It regards its long past with pride. From Roman town it passed to medieval trade juggernaut, and its old centre constitutes one of the greatest concentrations of Gothic architecture in Europe. Beyond this core are some of the world's more bizarre buildings: surreal spectacles capped by Antoni Gaudí's La Sagrada Família church.

Barcelona has been breaking ground in art, architecture and style since the late 19th century. From the marvels of Modernisme to the modern wonders of today, from Picasso to the likes of Susana Solano, the racing heart of Barcelona has barely skipped a beat. The city's avant-garde chefs whip up a storm that has even the French reaching for superlatives.

Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia, a region with its own language, character and history – many Catalans think of their home as a separate country. The city itself could keep you occupied for weeks but just outside it are sandy beaches, Sitges and the Montserrat mountain range.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Marvel at **La Sagrada Família** (p294), Antoni Gaudí's still-unfolding Modernista masterpiece
- Drink in the views from Gaudí's **Park Güell** (p295)
- Lose yourself in the hippest part of town, **El Born** (p318, p323), for tipping and snacking
- Study the earliest of Pablo's portraits in the **Museu Picasso** (p289)
- Grab your towel and tastebuds and head for **La Barceloneta** (p291)
- Get a spiritual lift in the strange soaring mountains of **Montserrat** (p336)
- Swan around inside the curvy **Casa Batlló** (p292), Gaudí's kookiest building
- Explore **Montjuïc** (p298), home to Romanesque art, a brooding fort and Miró
- Head down the coast for **Sitges** (p334), an outrageous party resort with yet more beaches

■ AREA: 477 SQ KM

■ AVE SUMMER TEMP: HIGH 28°C, LOW 20°C

■ POP: 1.58 MILLION



HISTORY

It is thought that Barcelona may have been founded by the Carthaginians in about 230 BC, taking the surname of Hamilcar Barca, Hannibal's father. Roman Barcelona (known as *Barcino*) covered an area within today's *Barri Gòtic* and was overshadowed by Tarraco (Tarragona), 90km to the southwest.

In the wake of Muslim occupation, and then Frankish domination, *Guifré el Pilós* (Wilfrid the Hairy) founded the house of the Counts of Barcelona (Comtes de Barcelona) in AD 878. Barcelona grew rich on pickings from the collapse of the Muslim caliphate of Córdoba in the 11th century. Under Ramon Berenguer III (1082–1131), Catalonia launched its own fleet and sea trade developed.

In 1137 Ramon Berenguer IV married Petronilla, heiress of Aragón, creating a joint state and setting the scene for Catalonia's golden age. Jaume I (1213–76) wrenched the Balearic Islands and Valencia from the Muslims in the 1230s to 40s. Jaume I's son Pere II followed with Sicily in 1282. Then came a spectacular expansion of Catalonia's Mediterranean trade-based empire, albeit hampered at home by divisions in the ruling family, the odd clash with Castilla and trouble with the aristocracy in Aragón. Malta (1283), Athens (1310), Corsica (1323), Sardinia (1324) and Naples (1423) fell, for varying periods, under Catalan dominance.

The accession of the Aragonese noble Fernando to the throne in 1479 augured ill for Barcelona, and his marriage to Queen Isabel of Castilla more still. Catalonia effectively became a subordinate part of the Castilian state. In the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13), Barcelona backed the wrong horse, was abandoned by its European allies and fell to Felipe V in September 1714. Felipe abolished the Generalitat (Parliament), built a huge fort, the Ciutadella, to watch over Barcelona, and banned the writing and teaching of Catalan.

Modernisme, Anarchy & Civil War

The 19th century brought economic resurgence. Wine, cotton, cork and iron industries developed, as did urban working-class poverty and unrest. To ease the crush, Barcelona's medieval walls were demolished in 1854, and in 1869 work began on L'Eixample, an extension of the city beyond Plaça de Catalunya. The flourishing bourgeoisie paid for lavish buildings, many of them in the unique Modernista style, whose leading exponent was Antoni

Gaudí (seven of his buildings in Barcelona together form a World Heritage site).

Modernisme was the most visible aspect of the Catalan *Renaixença*, a movement for the revival of Catalan language and culture in the late 19th century. By the turn of the 20th century, Barcelona was also Spain's hotbed of avant-garde art, with close ties to Paris.

In the decades around the turn of the century Barcelona became a vortex of anarchists, Republicans, bourgeois regionalists, gangsters, police terrorists, political *pistoleros* (gunmen), and meddling by Madrid.

Within days of the formation of Spain's Second Republic in 1931, Catalan nationalists, led by Francesc Macià and Lluís Companys, proclaimed Catalonia a republic within an imaginary 'Iberian Federation'. Madrid pressured them into accepting a unitary Spanish state, but Catalonia got a new regional government, with the old title of Generalitat.

For nearly a year after Franco's rise in 1936, Barcelona was run by revolutionary anarchists and the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM; Workers' Marxist Unification Party) Trotskyist militia, with Companys as president only in name. In 1937 the Catalan communist party (PSUC; Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya) took control and disarmed the anarchists and POUM. One of those to watch on in distress at this fratricidal conflict was George Orwell, who recorded his war efforts in his classic *Homage to Catalonia*. The city fell to Franco in 1939, and there followed a long period of repression.

From Franco to the Present

The big social change under Franco was the flood of immigrants, chiefly Andalucía, attracted by economic growth in Catalonia. Some 750,000 people came to Barcelona in the '50s and '60s, and almost as many to the rest of Catalonia. Many lived in appalling conditions.

Three years after Franco's death in 1975, a new Spanish constitution created the autonomous community of Catalonia (Catalunya in Catalan, Cataluña in Castilian), with Barcelona as its capital, in the context of a new quasi-federation. The Generalitat has wide powers over agriculture, education, health, industry, tourism, local police and trade. The autonomy statutes were renegotiated in 2006, increasing Catalonia's fiscal independence.

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Jordi Pujol's moderate nationalist *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) coalition won regional elections in 1980 and remained in control until late 2003, when a left-wing coalition under Pasqual Maragall's *Partit Socialista de Catalunya* (PSC, aligned with the national PSOE) took power. It collapsed in 2006 and fresh elections were called late that year. Barcelona itself has, since the return of democracy, always been run by a PSC council.

The 1992 Olympics spurred a burst of public works, bringing new life to areas such as Montjuïc, where the major events were held, and the once-shabby waterfront. The impetus has barely let up. The *Fòrum* area on the northeast waterfront has been transformed from wasteland into a high-rise residential and congress district with a new marina. Other spectacular buildings, such as Jean Nouvel's *Torre Agbar*, are just part of a continuing programme of urban transformation.

ORIENTATION

Barcelona's coastline runs roughly northeast to southwest, and many streets are parallel or perpendicular to it.

The focal axis is *La Rambla*, a 1.25km boulevard running northwest, and slightly uphill, from *Port Vell* (Old Harbour) to *Plaça de Catalunya*. The latter marks the boundary between *Ciutat Vella* (Old City) and *L'Eixample*, the grid of straight streets into which Barcelona grew from the late 19th century.

Ciutat Vella, a warren of streets, centuries-old buildings, hotels, restaurants and bars, spreads either side of *La Rambla*. Its heart is the lower half of the section east of *La Rambla*, called the *Barri Gòtic* (Gothic Quarter). West of *La Rambla* is somewhat edgier *El Raval*. *Ciutat Vella* continues northeast of *Barri Gòtic* across *Via Laietana* to *La Ribera*, east of which lies the pretty *Parc de la Ciutadella*.

Port Vell (Old Port) has a great aquarium and two marinas. At its northeast end is *La Barceloneta*, the old sailors' and former industrial workers' quarter, from where beaches

and a pedestrian promenade stretch 1km northeast to *Port Olímpic*, built for the Olympics and now surrounded by lively bars and restaurants.

You will find most of Barcelona's singular *Modernista* architecture, including *La Sagrada Família*, in *L'Eixample*.

Gràcia, beyond the wide *Avinguda Diagonal* on the northern edge of central *L'Eixample*, is a net of narrow streets and squares with a varied population, and can be a lively place to spend a Friday or Saturday night. Just north of *Gràcia* is *Gaudí's Park Güell*.

Two good landmarks are the hills of *Montjuïc* and *Tibidabo*. *Montjuïc*, the lower of the two, begins about 700m southwest of the bottom (southeast end) of *La Rambla*. *Tibidabo*, with its TV tower and statue of Christ, is 6km northwest of *Plaça de Catalunya*. It's the high point of the *Collserola* range of wooded hills that forms the backdrop to the city.

El Prat airport is 12km to the southwest of central Barcelona, although judging by the transport options and interminable roadworks you'd think it was light years away (see p331).

Maps

Tourist offices hand out free city and transport maps but *Lonely Planet's Barcelona City Map* (1:24,000 with a complete index of streets and sights) is better. Also handy is *Michelin's ring-bound Barcelona*, scaled at 1:12,000.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Altair (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 342 71 71; www.altair.es; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 616) Excellent travel bookshop with maps, guides and travel literature.

Antinow (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 90 70; Carrer de Josep Anselm Clavé 6) Good gay bookshop and café.

Casa del Llibre (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 272 34 80; www.casadellibro.com; Passeig de Gràcia 62) Enormous general bookshop.

Elephant (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 443 05 94; Carrer de la Creu dels Molers 12) A bright English-language bookshop where you can trade.

Laie (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 518 17 39; www.laie.es; Carrer de Pau Claris 85) Novels and books on architecture, art and film, in English and French, and a fine café.

Libreria & Informació Cultural de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 64 62; La Rambla dels Estudis 118) First stop for books on all things Catalan.

Quera (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 318 07 43; Carrer de Petritxol 2) Map and guidebook specialists.

Cultural Centres

British Council (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 241 99 72; www.britishcouncil.org/es/spain.htm; Carrer d'Amigó 74) Language school, library and occasional cultural events.

Institut Français de Barcelona (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 567 77 77; www.institutfrances.org; Carrer de Moia 8) French-language school that puts on films, concerts and exhibitions.

Institut for North American Studies (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 240 51 10; www.ien.es; Via Augusta 123) The main centre for learning North American English; also has library services.

Emergency

Tourists who want to report thefts need to go to the **Policia Nacional** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 091; Carrer Nou de la Rambla 80) or the **Guàrdia Urbana** (Local Police; Map pp278-9; ☎ 092; La Rambla 43). See also p845 for a handy national number and website.

Ambulance (☎ 061)

EU standard emergency number (☎ 112)

Fire Brigade (Bombers; ☎ 080, 085)

Institut Català de la Dona (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 495 16 00; www.gencat.net/icdona; Carrer de Viladomat 319) For rape counselling.

Mossos d'Esquadra (Catalan State Police; ☎ 088)

Internet Access

Bornet (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 15 07; www.bornet-bcn.com; Carrer de Barra de Ferro 3; per hr €2.60, per 5 hrs €10; 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 3-10pm Sat & Sun) A cool little internet centre—cum—art gallery.

easyInternetcafé (www.easyeverything.com) *Plaça de Catalunya* (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 412 13 97; Ronda de l'Universitat 35; 10am-2am); *El Raval* (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 318 24 35; La Rambla 31; 10am-2.30am) With 300 terminals and a café, this is an internet temple. For €1 you get about 30 minutes (depending on demand). Unlimited access costs €5/7/12 per day/week/month.

Internet Resources

www.bcn.es The City of Barcelona's municipal website, with many links.

www.barcelonareporter.com A portal that gathers news articles from and about Barcelona and Catalonia.

www.lecool.com Subscribe for free to this site for weekly events listings.

www.rutadelmodernisme.com Web page of route, monuments and events related to Modernisme.

Laundry

Lavaxpress (Map pp274-5; www.lavaxpres.com; Carrer de Ferlandina 34; 10am-10pm) An 8kg wash costs €3.50, drying is €3.50 for 30 minutes.

BARCELONA IN...

Two Days

Start with the **Barri Gòtic** (p285). After a stroll along **La Rambla** (p283), wade into the labyrinth to admire **La Catedral** (p286) and surrounding monuments, including the fascinating *Plaça del Rei*, now part of the **Museu d'Història de la Ciutat** (p287). Cross *Via Laietana* into **La Ribera** (p289) to square up to the city's favourite and most beautiful church, the **Església de Santa Maria del Mar** (p290), and the nearby **Museu Picasso** (p289). To round off, plunge into the warren of bars and restaurants in the funky **El Born** (p290) area for a meal and cocktails.

The following day, start off at *Gaudí's Park Güell* (p295), conceived as a residential hideaway for the well-off and now a joyous public park laced with the architect's singular creations. After a picnic lunch in the park, head for *Gaudí's* extraordinary work in progress, **La Sagrada Família** (p294). Such grandeur may have you reaching for a drink in nearby **Michael Collins Pub** (p325), before heading off for dinner elsewhere in *L'Eixample*, say at **Cerveseria Catalana** (p321).

Four Days

You could start the third day with another round of *Gaudí*, visiting **Casa Batlló** (p292) and **La Pedrera** (p293). So much culture may have you crying out for relaxation, so head for the beach and follow with a seafood feast at one of the many eateries in **La Barceloneta** (p291). Day four should be dedicated to **Montjuïc** (p298), with its museums, galleries, fortress, gardens and Olympic stadium. Some good eateries can be discovered downhill at nearby **Poble Sec** (p322).

One Week

With three extra days you can explore further, taking in the **El Raval** district (p288), the **Tibidabo** (p296) amusement park and some walking in the **Collserola** (p297) parklands. A tempting one-day excursion is **Montserrat** (p336), Catalonia's 'sacred mountain', or spend a day at the beach at **Sitges** (p334), followed by a meal and a wild night at its bars.

Lavomatic Barri Gòtic (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 342 51 19; Plaça de Joaquim Xirau 1; ̣ 9am-9pm); La Ribera (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 47 68; Carrer del Consolat de Mar 43-45) A 7kg wash costs €5.50, drying is €0.85 for five minutes.

Wash'N Dry (Map pp272-3; ☎ 902 100703; www.washndry.net; Carrer de Torrençes de l'Olla 105; ̣ 7am-10pm) There are six other branches around town. An 8kg wash costs €4.50, drying is €1 per 10 minutes; there's a wash, dry and fold service for an extra fee.

Left Luggage

At the airport, **left luggage** (consigna; ̣ 24 hr) is on the ground floor of Terminal B, at the end closest to Terminal C. It costs €4.10 per piece per day.

Estació Sants, the train station, has lockers (̣ 5.30am-11pm) charging €3/4.50 per small/big item for 24 hours, as does the main bus station, Estació del Nord.

Lost Property

Oficina de Trovalles (Lost Property; Map pp278-9; ☎ 010; Carrer de la Ciutat 9; ̣ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri)

Taxis Lost Property (☎ 902 101564)

TMB Bus & Metro Lost Property – Centre d'Atenció al Client (☎ 93 318 70 74)

Media

El País includes a daily supplement devoted to Catalonia, but the region has a lively home-grown press too. *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico* are the main local Castilian-language dailies. The latter also publishes a Catalan version. *Avui* is the more conservative and Catalan-nationalist daily. *El Punt* concentrates on news in and around Barcelona.

Medical Services

Call ☎ 010 to find out where the nearest late-opening duty pharmacy is. There are also several 24-hour pharmacies scattered across town.

Farmàcia Álvarez (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 302 11 24; Passeig de Gràcia 26)

Farmàcia Clapés (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 28 43; La Rambla de Sant Joseph 98)

Farmàcia Torres (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 453 92 20; Carrer d'Aribau 62)

Hospital Clínic i Provincial (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 227 54 00; Carrer de Villarroel 170)

Hospital de la Creu Roja (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 507 27 00; Carrer del Dos de Maig 301)

Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 291 90 00; Carrer de Sant Antoni Maria Claret 167)

Money

Banks abounds in Barcelona, many with ATMs, including several around Plaça de Catalunya, on La Rambla and on Plaça de Sant Jaume in Barri Gòtic.

The foreign-exchange offices that you see along La Rambla and elsewhere are open for longer hours than banks but generally offer poorer rates.

Interchange (Amex; Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 342 73 11; La Rambla dels Caputxins 74; ̣ 9am-midnight daily Apr-Sep, 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Oct-Mar)

Representatives for American Express. It will cash Amex travellers cheques in euros commission free and replace lost cheques (but not cards).

Post

The main post office (Map pp278-9; Plaça d'Antoni López; ̣ 8.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) is opposite the northeast end of Port Vell. There's a handy branch (Map pp272-3; Carrer d'Aragó 282; ̣ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) just off Passeig de Gràcia.

Tourist Information

A couple of general information lines worth bearing in mind are ☎ 010 and ☎ 012. The first is for Barcelona and the latter is for all of Catalonia (run by the Generalitat). You may sometimes strike English-speakers but most operators are Catalan-Castilian bilingual.

In addition to the following listed tourist offices, information booths operate at Estació Nord bus station, Portal de la Pau and at the foot of the Monument a Colom (Map pp274-5). At least three others set up at various points in the city centre in summer.

Oficina d'Informació de Turisme de Barcelona

Main Branch (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 285 38 34; www.barcelonaturisme.com; Plaça de Catalunya 17-S underground; ̣ 9am-9pm); Aeroport del Prat (̣ 9am-9pm); Estació Sants (Map pp268-9; ̣ 8am-8pm Jun-Sep, 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat, Sun & holidays Oct-May); Town Hall (Map pp278-9; Carrer de la Ciutat 2; ̣ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun & holidays) The main Barcelona tourist information office concentrates on city information and can help book accommodation. The branch in the airport's EU arrivals hall has information on all of Catalonia. A smaller office at the international arrivals hall opens the same hours. The train-station branch has limited city information. There's also a branch in the *ajuntament* (town hall).

Palau de la Virreina Arts Information Office (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 77 75; La Rambla de Sant Josep 99; ̣ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) A useful office for events information (and tickets).

WARNING! AN EYE ON YOUR VALUABLES

Every year aggrieved readers write in with tales of woe from Barcelona. Petty crime and theft, with tourists as the prey of choice, is a problem, so you need to take a few common-sense precautions to avoid joining this regrettable list. Nine times out of 10 it is easy enough to avoid.

Thieves and pickpockets operate on airport trains and the metro, especially around stops popular with tourists (such as La Sagrada Família). The Old City (Ciutat Vella) is the pickpockets' and bag-snatchers' prime hunting ground. Take special care on and around La Rambla. Prostitutes working the lower (waterfront) end often do a double trade in wallet snatching. Also, stay well clear of the ball-and-three-cups (*trileros*) brigades on La Rambla. This is always a set-up and you will lose your money (and maybe have your pockets emptied as you watch the game).

Regional tourist office

(Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 238 40 00; www.gencat.net/probert; Passeig de Gràcia 107; ̣ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Housed in the Palau Robert, it has a host of material on Catalonia.

Travel Agencies

Halcón Viatges (Map pp272-3; ☎ 807 722 7222; www.halconviatges.com in Spanish; Carrer de Pau Claris 108) Reliable chain of travel agents that sometimes has good deals. This is one of many branches around town.

Viajes Zeppelin (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 412 00 13; www.viajeszeppelin.com in Spanish; Carrer de Villarroel 49) Small chain that often finds good-value fares.

SIGHTS

Barcelona could be divided up into thematic chunks. In Ciutat Vella (especially the Barri Gòtic and La Ribera) are clustered the bulk of the city's ancient and medieval splendours. Along with El Raval, on the other side of La Rambla, and Port Vell, where old Barcelona meets the sea, this is the core of the city's life, by day and by night.

L'Eixample is where the Modernistas went to town. Here the attractions are more spread out. Passeig de Gràcia is a concentrated showcase for some of the most outstanding of their work, but La Sagrada Família, Gaudí's masterpiece, and other outstanding buildings are scattered about.

The beaches and working-class district of La Barceloneta (which is riddled with seafood restaurants) form a separate summery side of the city, just as Montjuïc, with its gardens, museums, art galleries and Olympic Games sites, forms a microcosm on its own.

Gaudí's Park Güell is just beyond the area of Gràcia, whose narrow lanes and interlocking squares set the scene for much lively nightlife.

Further sights, ranging from FC Barcelona's Camp Nou football stadium to the

peaceful haven of the Museu-Monestir de Pedralbes, glitter like distant stars away from the centre.

La Rambla

Head to Spain's most famous street for a first taste of Barcelona's vibrant atmosphere. Flanked by narrow traffic lanes, La Rambla is a broad pedestrian boulevard, lined with cafés and restaurants, and crowded deep into the night with a cross-section of Barcelona's permanent and transient populace.

La Rambla gets its name from a seasonal stream (*raml* in Arabic) that once ran here. It was outside the city walls until the 14th century, and was built up with monastic buildings and palaces in the 16th to 18th centuries. Unofficially it's divided into five sections with their own names.

From Plaça de Catalunya, La Rambla de Canaletes is named after an inconspicuous fount, whose drinking water (despite claims that anyone who drinks it will return to Barcelona) nowadays leaves much to be desired. Delirious football fans gather here to celebrate whenever the main home side, FC Barcelona, win a cup or the league premiership. A block east along Carrer de la Canuda is Plaça de la Vila de Madrid, with a sunken garden where Roman tombs (Map pp278-9) lie exposed.

The second stretch, La Rambla dels Estudis, from below Carrer de la Canuda to Carrer de la Portaferriça, is popularly known as La Rambla dels Ocells (Birds) because of its twittering bird market. From Carrer de la Portaferriça to Plaça de la Boqueria, what is officially called La Rambla de Sant Josep (named after a now nonexistent monastery) is lined with flower stalls, which give it the alternative name Rambla de les Flors.

The Palau de la Virreina (Map pp278-9; La Rambla de Sant Josep 99) is a grand 18th-century rococo

mansion housing a municipal arts-entertainment information and ticket office. Next is the **Mercat de la Boqueria** (Map pp278–9), one of the best stocked and most colourful produce markets in Europe. Plaça de la Boqueria, where four side streets meet just north of Liceu metro station, is your chance to walk all over a **Miró** – the colourful **Mosaic de Miró** (Map pp278–9) in the pavement, with one tile signed by the artist.

Barcelona takes pride in being a pleasure centre and in the **Museu de l'Eròtica** (Map pp278–9; ☎ 93 318 98 65; www.erotica-museum.com; La Rambla de Sant Josep 96; adult/senior & student €7.50/6.50; 10am-midnight Jun-Sep, 11am-9pm Oct-May; ♀) you can observe just how people have been enjoying themselves since ancient times – lots of Kamasutra and 1920s porn flicks.

La Rambla dels Caputxins (named after yet another defunct monastery and also known as Rambla del Centre) runs from Plaça de la Boqueria to Carrer dels Escudellers. The west side is flanked by the Gran Teatre del Liceu (Map pp278–9, see right).

Further south, on the east side of Rambla dels Caputxins, is the entrance to the palm-shaded Plaça Reial. Below this point La Rambla gets seedier, with a few strip clubs

and peep shows. The final stretch, La Rambla de Santa Mònica, widens out to approach the **Monument a Colom** (Map pp274–5) overlooking Port Vell. La Rambla here is named after the Convento de Santa Mònica that once stood on the western flank of the street and has since been converted into an art gallery and cultural centre, the **Centre d'Art Santa Mònica** (Map pp278–9; ☎ 93 316 28 10; La Rambla de Santa Mònica 7; admission free; 11am-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun & holidays).

On the east side lurks the **Museu de Cera** (Map pp278–9; ☎ 93 317 26 49; www.museocerabcn.com; Passatge de la Banca 7; adult/under 12yr €6.65/3.75; 10am-1.30pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm & 4.30-8.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays; ♀), a wax museum with a hall of horror and everyone from Lady Di to General Franco.

GRAN TEATRE DEL LICEU

Barcelona's grand opera house (Map pp278–9; ☎ 93 485 99 00; www.liceubarcelona.com; La Rambla dels Caputxins 51-59; admission €4; ♀) was built in 1847, largely destroyed by fire in 1994, and reopened better than ever in 1999.

The Liceu launched such Catalan stars as Josep (aka José) Carreras and Montserrat Caballé, and can seat up to 2300. Guided tours (adult/student/under 10 years/€9/7/free) are at

10am and there are standard visits at 11.30am, noon and 1pm. On the standard visit you are taken to the grand foyer, and then up the marble staircase to the glittering, neo-baroque **Saló dels Miralls** (Hall of Mirrors). You are then led up to the 4th floor to admire the theatre in all its splendour from the high stalls. The longer tour takes in the above and a collection of Modernista art, El Cercle del Liceu.

MONUMENT A COLOM

The bottom end of La Rambla, and the harbour beyond, lie under the supervision of this late-19th-century monument (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 302 52 24; Plaça del Portal de la Pau; lift adult/senior & child/under 4yr €2.30/1.50/free; 9am-8.30pm May-Oct, 10am-6.30pm Nov-Apr) to the glory of Christopher Columbus (who some Catalan historians insist came from Barcelona rather than Genoa in Italy). Take the lift to the top for spectacular views over the city.

MUSEU MARÍTIM

West of the Monument a Colom stand the Reials Drassanes (Royal Shipyards), now home to the fascinating **Maritime Museum** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 342 99 20; www.museumaritimbarcelona.org; Avinguda de les Drassanes; adult/senior & child €6/3; 10am-8pm), a rare work of civil Gothic architecture that was once the launch pad for a mighty medieval fleet. The museum, together with its setting, forms a fascinating tribute to the seafaring that shaped much of Barcelona's history. And you can take a load off afterwards in the pleasant restaurant-café.

The shipyards, first built in the 13th century, gained their present form (a series of long bays divided by stone arches) a century later. Extensions in the 17th century made them big enough to accommodate the building of 30 galleys. In their shipbuilding days (up to the 18th century) the sea came right up to them.

Inside is an impressive array of boats, models, maps, paintings and more, with areas devoted to ships' figureheads, Columbus and Magellan, and 16th-century galleys (the full-scale replica of Don Juan of Austria's royal galley from the Battle of Lepanto is the highlight).

The museum is free from 3pm to 8pm on the first Saturday of each month.

Barri Gòtic

Barcelona's 'Gothic Quarter', east of La Rambla, is a classic medieval warren of narrow, winding streets, quaint *plaças* (plazas), and

TOP FIVE WHAT'S FREE?

- Park Güell (p295) Gaudi's weird and wonderful landscaped park.
- CaixaForum (p299) A grand gallery of modern art with constantly changing exhibitions.
- Església de Santa Maria del Mar (p290) Barcelona's best example of Catalan Gothic.
- Estadi Olímpic (p300) The site of the 1992 Olympics.
- Temple Romà d'Augustí (p287) The soaring columns left over from a great Roman temple.

grand mansions and monuments from the city's golden age. Many of its great buildings date from the 15th century or earlier. The district is liberally seasoned with restaurants, cafés and bars, so sightseeing relief is always close to hand!

The Barri Gòtic stretches from La Rambla in the west, to Via Laietana in the east, and roughly from Carrer de la Portaferrissa in the north, to Carrer de la Mercè in the south. Carrer de Ferran and Carrer de Jaume I, cutting across the middle, form a kind of halfway line: these streets and those to their north tend to be peppered with chic little shops, while those to their south become marginally seedier (but no less lively).

PLAÇA DE SANT JAUME

It's hard to imagine that on this very spot, a couple of thousand years ago, folk in togas would discuss the day's events and Roman politics. For hereabout lay the Roman-era Forum and the square as you see it today has again been Barcelona's political hub since at least the 15th century. Facing each other across it are the Palau de la Generalitat (the seat of Catalonia's government) on the north side, and the *ajuntament* (town hall) on the south side. Both have fine Gothic interiors.

The **Palau de la Generalitat** (Map pp278–9), founded in the early 15th century, is open only on limited occasions (10am to 1pm on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, when there's a free guided visit, as well as 23 April, 11 September and 24 September). The most impressive of the ceremonial halls is the

DISCOUNTS & OPENING TIMES

Students generally pay a little over half adult admission prices, as do children aged under 12 and senior citizens (aged 65 and over) with appropriate ID. Several sights have free-entry days, often just once a month. For example, the **Museu Picasso** (p289) is free on the first Sunday of the month and the **Museu Marítim** (opposite) on the first Saturday.

Possession of a Bus Turistic ticket (see p312) entitles you to discounts to some museums.

Articket (www.articketbcn.org) gives you admission to seven important art galleries for €20 and is valid for six months. The galleries are the **Museu Picasso**, **Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya** (MNAC), the **Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona** (Macba), the **Fundació Antoni Tàpies**, the **Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona** (CCCBC), the **Fundació Joan Miró** and **La Pedrera**. You can pick up the ticket through **Tel-Entrada** (☎ 902 101212; www.telentrada.com), at the tourist offices on Plaça de Catalunya, Plaça de Sant Jaume and Sants train station, or at selected branches of the Caixa de Catalunya bank.

If you want to get around Barcelona fast and visit multiple museums in the blink of an eye, the **Barcelona Card** might come in handy. It costs €23/28/31/34 for two/three/four/five days (a little less for children aged four to 12). You get free transport (and 20% off the A1 Aerobús, p331) and discounted admission prices (up to 30% off) or free entry to many museums and other sights, as well as minor discounts on purchases at a small number of shops, restaurants and bars. The card is available at the tourist offices; you should have a look at the pamphlet first to see whether the discounted sights are what you are hoping to see.

The Ruta del Modernisme pack (see p292) is well worth looking into.

Museum and art-gallery opening hours vary considerably, but as a rule of thumb you should be OK between 10am and 6pm, Tuesday to Friday, in most places (some shut for lunch from around 2pm to 4pm). Many museums and galleries close all day Monday, and from 2pm Sunday.

Saló de Sant Jordi, named after the region's patron saint, St George. At any time, however, you can admire the original Gothic main entrance on Carrer del Bisbe Iruirita.

Outside, the only feature of the **ajuntament** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 010; 10am-1pm Sun) that's now worthy of note is the disused Gothic entrance on Carrer de la Ciutat. Inside you can visit, above all, the **Saló de Cent**, a fine arched hall created in the 14th century (but since remodelled) for the medieval city council, the **Consell de Cent**. Guided visits start every 30 minutes, and English and French speakers are catered for.

CATEDRAL & AROUND

You can reach Barcelona's **catedral** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 342 82 60; Plaça de la Seu; admission free, special visit €4; 10am-12.15pm & 5.15-7.30pm, special visit 1-5pm), one of its most magnificent Gothic structures, by following Carrer del Bisbe Iruirita northwest from Plaça de Sant Jaume. The narrow old streets around the cathedral are traffic-free and dotted with occasionally very talented buskers.

The best view of the cathedral is from Plaça de la Seu beneath its main **northwest façade**. Unlike most of the building, which dates from between 1298 and 1460, this façade was not created until the 1870s! They say it is based on a 1408 design and it is odd in that it reflects northern-European Gothic styles rather than the sparer, Catalan version.

The interior of the cathedral is a broad, soaring space. It is divided into a central nave and two aisles by lines of elegant, thin pillars.

In the first chapel, on the right from the northwest entrance, the main Crucifixion figure above the altar is **Sant Crist de Lepant**, carried on the prow of the Spanish flagship at the battle of Lepanto. It is said the figure acquired its odd stance by dodging an incoming cannonball. Further along this same wall, past the southwest transept, are the wooden coffins of Count Ramon Berenguer I and his wife Almodis, cofounders of the 11th-century Romanesque predecessor to the present cathedral.

Smack bang in the middle of the central nave is the late-14th-century, exquisitely sculpted timber **coro** (choir stall; admission €1.50). The coats of arms belong to members of the Barcelona chapter of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

The **crypt** beneath the main altar contains the remarkable alabaster tomb of Santa Eulàlia, one of Barcelona's patron saints and a good Christian lass of the 4th century, who suffered terrible tortures and death at the hands of the pagan Romans. Some of these are depicted on the tomb.

For a bird's-eye (mind the poop) view of medieval Barcelona, visit the cathedral's **roof and tower** (admission €2) by a lift from the **Capella de les Animes del Purgatori**, near the north-east transept.

From the southwest transept, exit to the lovely **claustr** (cloister), with its trees, fountains and geese (there have been geese here for centuries). One of the cloister chapels commemorates 930 priests, monks and nuns, martyred in the civil war.

Along the northern flank of the cloister you can enter the **Sala Capitular** (chapterhouse; admission €1.50; 10am-12.15pm & 5.15-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.45pm & 5.15-7pm Sun). Although bathed in the rich reds of the carpet, and cosseted by fine-timber seating, the few artworks gathered here are of minor interest. Among them is a *Pietat* by Bartolomeo Bermejo.

You can visit the cathedral in one of two ways. In the morning or the afternoon, entrance is free and you can visit any combination of the choir stalls, chapterhouse and roof you choose. If you want to visit all three, it costs less (and is less crowded) to enter for the so-called 'special visit'.

At the northern end of Carrer del Bisbe Iruirita, poke your head into the courtyards of the 16th-century **Casa de l'Ardiaca** (Archdeacon's House, Map pp278-9) and the 13th-century **Palau del Bispat** (Bishop's Palace, Map pp278-9). On the outside of both buildings, at the very end of Carrer del Bisbe Iruirita, the foundations of the rounded towers that flanked a Roman gate are visible. The lower part of the **Casa de l'Ardiaca's** northwest wall was part of the **Roman walls** (10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat). Inside the building itself you can see parts of the wall.

The walls ran along present-day Plaça de la Seu into what subsequently became the **Casa de la Pia Almoina** (Map pp278-9), a medieval alms house that now contains the **Museu Diocesà** (Diocesan Museum; Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 315 22 13; www.arqbcn.org; Avinguda de la Catedral 4; adult/senior & student/under 7yr €3/1.50/free; 10am-2pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun), where you can see a sparse collection of medieval religious art, usually supplemented by a temporary exposition.

Just beyond the southeast end of the cathedral stand four mighty columns of the **Temple Romà d'Augustí** (Roman Temple of Augustus; Map pp278-9; Carrer de Paradís 10; admission free; 10am-2pm Mon-Sat), built in the first century AD.

PLAÇA DEL REI

A stone's throw east of the cathedral, Plaça del Rei is the courtyard of the former **Palau Reial Major**, the palace of the Counts of Barcelona and monarchs of Aragón.

Most of the tall, centuries-old buildings surrounding Plaça del Rei are now open to visitors as the **Museu d'Història de la Ciutat** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 315 11 11; www.museuhistoria.bcn.es; Carrer del Veguer; adult/student €4/2.50, incl Museu-Monestir de Pedralbes & Park Güell Centre de Acollida; 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Oct-May, 10am-8pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Jun-Sep). The City History Museum is one of Barcelona's most fascinating sights, combining large sections of the palace with a subterranean walk through Roman and Visigothic Barcelona. Set aside at least an hour for the visit, and note that admission is free from 4pm to 8pm on the first Saturday of the month.

The entrance to the museum is through 16th-century **Casa Padellàs** (Map pp278-9), just south of Plaça del Rei. Casa Padellàs, with its courtyard typical of Barcelona's late-Gothic and baroque mansions, was moved here in the 1930s because of roadworks. The external courtyard staircase leads to a restored Roman tower. Below ground awaits a remarkable walk through excavated Roman and Visigothic ruins – complete with sections of a Roman street, baths, shops, along with remains of a Visigothic basilica. You emerge inside the former palace on the north side of the Plaça del Rei. To your right is the **Saló del Tinell** and to the left ahead of you is the **Capella Reial de Santa Agata**.

The **Saló del Tinell** (Map pp278-9) was the royal palace's throne hall, a masterpiece of strong, unfussy Catalan Gothic, built in the mid-14th century with wide, rounded arches holding up a wooden roof. The **Capella Reial de Santa Agata**, whose spindly bell tower rises from the northeast side of Plaça del Rei, was the palace's chapel and dates from the same period.

Head into Plaça del Rei down the fan-shaped stairs and bear right to the entrance to the multi-tiered **Mirador del Rei Martí** (Lookout Tower of King Martin, Map pp278-9), built

in 1555, from where you can enjoy eagle-eye views over the city.

The southwest side of Plaça del Rei is taken up by the **Palau del Lloctinent** (Viceroy's Palace, Map pp278-9), built in the 1550s as the residence of the Spanish viceroy of Catalonia.

MUSEU FREDERIC MARÈS

A short distance north is the **Museu Frederic Marès** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 310 58 00; www.museumares.bcn.es; Plaça de Sant Lu 5-6; adult/senior & student €3/1.50; 10am-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun & holidays; √), in another part of the **Palau Reial Major**. Marès was a rich 20th-century Catalan sculptor and collector. He specialised in medieval Spanish sculpture, huge quantities of which are displayed on the ground and 1st floors. The top two floors, known as the **Museu Sentimental**, hold a mind-boggling array of other Marès knock-knacks, from toy soldiers and cribs to scissors and tarot cards, along with some of his own sculptures. The museum is free on Wednesday afternoons and on the first Sunday of the month, and you can take a load off in the pleasant courtyard café.

ROMAN WALLS

From Plaça del Rei it's worth a detour to see the two best surviving stretches of Barcelona's Roman walls. One section (Map pp278-9) is on the southwest side of Plaça de Ramon Berenguer el Gran, with the **Capella Reial de Santa Agata** on top. The other (Map pp278-9) is further south, by the north end of Carrer del Sotstinent Navarro. They date from the 3rd and 4th centuries, when the Romans rebuilt their walls after the first attacks by Germanic tribes from the north.

PLAÇA DE SANT JOSEP ORIOL & AROUND

This small plaza is the prettiest in the Barri Gòtic. Its bars and cafés attract buskers and artists, and make it a lively place to hang out for a while. It's surrounded by quaint streets, many of them dotted with appealing cafés, timeless restaurants and cavernous old shops. The plaza is dominated by the Gothic **Església de Santa Maria del Pi** (Map pp278-9; 8.30am-1pm & 4.30-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm & 5-9pm Sun & holidays), completed in the 16th century. The beautiful rose window above its entrance on Plaça del Pi is claimed to be the world's biggest. The inside of the church was gutted by anarchists' fire in 1936, and most of the stained glass is modern.

SINAGOGA MAJOR

The area between Carrer dels Banys Nous, to the east of the church, and Plaça de Sant Jaume is known as the Call, and was Barcelona's Jewish quarter – and centre of learning – from at least the 11th century until anti-Semitism saw the Jews expelled from it in 1424. Here the sparse remains of the medieval **Sinagoga Major** (Main Synagogue; Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 07 90; www.calldebarcelona.org; Carrer de Marlet 5; admission free; ↻ 11am-2pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun) have been revealed and returned to occasional use as a functioning temple. Remnants of medieval and Roman-era walls remain, suggesting (given their orientation towards Jerusalem) that there may have been a Jewish place of worship here in Roman times.

PLAÇA REIAL & AROUND

Just south of Carrer de Ferran, **Plaça Reial** (Map pp278-9) is an elegant shady square surrounded by eateries, nightspots and budget accommodation. Its 19th-century neoclassical architecture looks as if it would be at home in some Parisian quarter (but the palm trees wouldn't). The lampposts next to the central fountain are Gaudí's first known works.

Until the 1980s, the square and surrounding streets had long been a den of poverty, drug abuse and prostitution. A whiff of its dodgy past remains, in the form of a few down-and-outs and the occasional pickpocket. Today locals and tourists mostly fill the square's bars and restaurants with chatter and laughter.

El Raval

West of La Rambla, Ciutat Vella spreads to Ronda de Sant Antoni, Ronda de Sant Pau and Avinguda del Paral·lel, which together trace the line of Barcelona's 14th-century walls. Known as El Raval, the area contains what remains of one of the city's slums, the seedy red-light zone and drug-abusers' haunt of the Barri Xìnes, at its south end. It's not nearly as tricky as it once was, but watch your pockets nonetheless.

MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI & AROUND

The vast, white **Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona** (Macba; Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 412 08 10; www.macba.es; Plaça dels Àngels 1; admission €7, Wed €3; ↻ 11am-7.30pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun &

holidays; √) is a temple to contemporary art. Artists frequently on show include Antoni Tàpies, Miquel Barceló and a host of very new installation artists.

Behind the museum is the **Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona** (CCCB; Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 306 41 00; www.cccb.org; Carrer de Montalegre 5; adult/student €6/4.40; ↻ 11am-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun & holidays 21 Jun-21 Sep; 11am-2pm & 4-8pm Tue & Thu-Fri, 11am-8pm Wed & Sat, 11am-7pm Sun & holidays 22 Sep-20 Jun; √), a complex of auditoriums and exhibition and conference halls created in the early 1990s from an 18th-century hospice. The big courtyard, with a vast glass wall on one side, is spectacular. Exhibitions are held here regularly.

On the south side of the square is the Gothic shell of the 16th-century **Convent dels Àngels** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 301 77 75; Plaça dels Àngels), where part of the Macba's permanent exhibition is shown.

Two blocks southeast of Plaça dels Àngels is an architectural masterpiece from another age. Founded in the early 15th century as the city's main hospital, the **Antic Hospital de la Santa Creu** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 270 23 00; Carrer de l'Hospital 56; admission free; ↻ library 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) today houses the **Biblioteca de Catalunya** (Catalonia's national library). Take a look inside to admire some fine Catalan-Gothic construction.

The chapel (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 442 71 71; www.bcn.es/virreinaexposicions; Carrer de l'Hospital 56; ↻ noon-2pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun & holidays) of the former hospital is used for temporary exhibitions.

PALAU GÜELL

Gaudí's **Palau Güell** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 39 74; Carrer Nou de la Rambla 3-5) is the only major Modernist building in Ciutat Vella, although it's closed for restoration until 2007. Gaudí built it in the late 1880s for his most constant patron, the industrialist Eusebi Güell. It lacks some of Gaudí's later playfulness but is still a characteristic riot of styles – Art Nouveau, Gothic, Islamic – and materials. After the civil war it was in police hands and political prisoners were tortured in its basement.

Features to look out for include the carved wooden ceilings and fireplace, the stonework, the use of mirrors, stained glass and wrought iron, and the main hall with its dome reaching right up to the roof. The roof is a weird world of fantastically shaped and polychrome-tiled chimneypots.

La Ribera

La Ribera is cut off from the Barri Gòtic by noisy Via Laietana, which was driven through the city in 1907. La Ribera, whose name refers to the waterfront that once lay much further inland, was the pumping commercial heart of medieval Barcelona. Its intriguing, narrow streets house major sights and a warren of good bars and restaurants, mainly in the too-cool-for-school El Born area.

PALAU DE LA MÚSICA CATALANA

The **Palace of Catalan Music** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 902 442882; www.palaumusica.org; Carrer de Sant Francesc de Paula 2; adult/student/under 12yr €8/7/free) is a Modernist high point and World Heritage Site. It's not exactly a symphony, more a series of crescendos in tile, brick, sculptured stone and stained glass. Built between 1905 and 1908 by Lluís Domènech i Montaner for the Orfeo Català musical society, it was conceived as a temple for the Catalan Renaixença. Tours (included in the admission price) run for 50 minutes every half hour from 10am to 7pm in July and August and from 10am to 3.30pm during the rest of the year.

You can see some of its splendours – such as the main façade with its mosaics, floral capitals and sculpture cluster representing Catalan popular music – from the outside and wander into the foyer to admire the lovely tiled pillars and décor of the café and ticket office area.

Best of all, however, is the richly colourful auditorium upstairs, with its ceiling of blue-and-gold stained glass and, above a bust of Beethoven, a towering sculpture of Wagner's valkyries (Wagner was No 1 on the Renaixença charts). To see this, you need to attend a concert or join a guided tour.

MERCAT DE SANTA CATERINA

A 19th-century market, built on the site of a 15th-century monastery, was replaced in 2005 with this original, colourful market (Map pp278-9; www.mercatsantacaterina.net; Avinguda de Francesc Cambó 16; ↻ 8am-2pm Mon, to 3.30pm Tue & Wed, to 8.30pm Thu & Fri, to 3.30pm Sat; √) designed by the adventurous Catalan architect Enric Miralles. The outstanding element is the bright, ceramic-covered, wavy roof – a splash of pastel loopyness.

MUSEU PICASSO

Barcelona's most visited museum (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 63 10; www.museupicasso.bcn.es; Carrer de Montcada 15-23; adult/student/under 12yr €6/3/free;

↻ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun & holidays; √) occupies five of the many fine medieval stone mansions (worth wandering into for their courtyards and galleries) on narrow Carrer de Montcada. The collection concentrates on Picasso's formative years and several specific moments in his later life. Allow two hours, and note that admission is free on the first Sunday of the month. There are additional charges for special exhibitions.

The museum's permanent collection is housed in the first three houses, the **Palau Aguilar**, **Palau del Baró de Castellet** and the **Palau Meca**, all dating back to the 14th century. The 18th-century **Casa Mauri**, built over some medieval remains (even some Roman leftovers have been identified), and the adjacent 14th-century **Palau Finestres** accommodate temporary exhibitions.

A visit starts, naturally enough, at the beginning, with sketches, oils and doodling from Picasso's earliest years in Málaga and La Coruña – most of it done between 1893 and 1895. Some of his self-portraits, and the portraits of his father, which date from 1896, are evidence enough of his precocious talent. The enormous *Ciència i Caritat* (Science and Charity) is proof to anyone that, had he wanted, Picasso would have made a fine mainstream artist. His first consciously thematic adventure, the Blue Period, is well covered. His nocturnal blue-tinted views of *Terrats de Barcelona* (The Rooftops of Barcelona) and *El Foll* (The Madman) are cold and cheerless, and yet somehow spectrally alive.

Among the later works, done in Cannes in 1957, there's a complex technical series (*Las Meninas*), which are studies on Diego Velázquez's masterpiece of the same name (which hangs in the Prado in Madrid).

MUSEU TÈXIL I D'INDUMENTÀRIA

This museum (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 76 03; www.museutextil.bcn.es; Carrer de Montcada 12-14; admission incl Palau Reial de Pedralbes museums €3.50; ↻ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun & holidays; √) is in the 14th-century **Palau dels Marquesos de Llió**, across the road from the Museu Picasso. Its 4000 items range from 4th-century Coptic textiles to 20th-century local embroidery. The museum's highlight is the big collection of clothing from the 16th century to the 1930s. The courtyard has a highly agreeable café and admission is free on the first Sunday of the month.

MUSEU BARBIER-MUELLER D'ART PRECOLOMBI

Occupying Palau Nadal, this museum (Map pp278-9; % 93 310 45 16; www.barbier-mueller.ch; Carrer de Montcada 12-14; adult/student/under 16 €3/1.50/free; h 11am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun & holidays; √) holds part of one of the world's most prestigious collections of pre-Columbian art, including gold jewellery, ceramics, statues and textiles. The artefacts from South American 'primitive' cultures come from the collections of the Swiss businessman Josef Mueller (1887-1977) and his son-in-law Jean-Paul Barbier, who directs the Musée Barbier-Mueller in Geneva. Admission is free on the first Sunday of the month.

CARRER DE MONTCADA

Several other mansions on this once-wealthy street of Barcelona merchant barons are now commercial art galleries where you're welcome to browse. The 16th-century Palau dels Cervelló, for instance, houses the Galeria Maeght (Map pp278-9; Carrer de Montcada 25), a branch of the renowned Paris gallery. The baroque courtyard of the originally medieval Palau de Dalmases (Map pp278-9; Carrer de Montcada 20) is one of the finest on the strip and home to a rather baroque bar.

ESGLÉSIA DE SANTA MARIA DEL MAR

Carrer de Montcada opens at its southeast end into Passeig del Born, a plaza that once rang to the cheers and jeers of medieval jousting tournaments, today replaced at night by animated carousing. At its southwest tip rises Barcelona's finest Gothic church, the Església de Santa Maria del Mar (Map pp278-9; % 93 319 05 16; Plaça de Santa Maria del Mar; h 9am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm). Built in the 14th century, Santa Maria was lacking in superfluous decoration even before anarchists gutted it in 1909 and 1936. This only serves to highlight its fine proportions, purity of line and sense of space. You may occasionally catch an evening recital of baroque music here.

MUSEU DE LA XOCOLATA

In the Museum of Chocolate (Map pp274-5; % 93 268 78 78; http://pastisseria.com; Plaça de Pons i Clerch s/n; admission €3.80; h 10am-7pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun & holidays; √) you can trace the origins of this fundamental foodstuff and admire (but not chomp into!) chocolate models of things like La Sagrada Família. Admission is free on the first Monday of the month.

Parc de la Ciutadella

East of La Ribera and north of La Barceloneta, the gentle Parc de la Ciutadella (Map pp274-5; h 8am-6pm Nov-Feb, 8am-8pm Oct & Mar, 8am-9pm Apr-Sep) makes a fine antidote to the noise and bustle of the city.

After the War of the Spanish Succession, Felipe V built a huge fort (La Ciutadella) to keep watch over Barcelona. Only in 1869 did the government allow its demolition, after which the site was turned into a park and used to host the Universal Exhibition of 1888.

The monumental Cascada (Map pp274-5) near the Passeig de les Pujades entrance was created between 1875 and 1881 by Josep Fontserè, with the help of a young Antoni Gaudí. It's a dramatic combination of classical statuary, rugged rocks, greenery and thundering water.

Southeast, in the fort's former arsenal, is the regional Parlament de Catalunya (Map pp274-5; % 93 304 65 45; www.parlament-cat.net; h 4-6pm), which has free guided visits in Catalan. It also opens on the first Friday of the month and on 11 and 12 September.

The south end of the park is occupied by the Zoo de Barcelona (Map pp274-5; % 93 225 67 80; www.zoobarcelona.com; adult/senior/4-12yr/under 4yr €14.50/7.50/8.75/free; h 10am-7pm Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Mar-May & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), which holds about 7500 living things, from gorillas to insects.

Along the Passeig de Picasso side of the park are several buildings created for the Universal Exhibition. These include two arboretums, the Museu de Geologia (Map pp274-5; % 93 319 69 12; www.bcn.es/museu-ciencies; Passeig de Picasso; admission with Museu de Zoologia €3; h 10am-2.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-6.30pm Thu) for rock- and fossil-lovers, and the Museu de Zoologia (Map pp274-5; % 93 319 69 12; Passeig de Picasso; admission with Museu de Geologia €3; h 10am-2.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-6.30pm Thu). The contents of this museum (stuffed animals and the kind of displays on the animal kingdom that once formed a part of the young child's school-outings programmes) are less interesting than the building itself. The Castell dels Tres Dragons (Three Dragons Castle) is a whimsical effort by Lluís Domènech i Montaner, who added medieval-castle trimmings on a pioneering steel frame for the Universal Exhibition.

Northwest of the park is the imposing Modernista Arc de Triomf (Map pp268-9; Passeig de Lluís Companys), with unusual, Islamic-style brickwork.

Port Vell

Barcelona's old port at the bottom of La Rambla, once such an eyesore that it caused public protests, has been transformed since the 1980s into a people-friendly leisure zone.

For a view of the harbour from the water, you can take a golondrina (excursion boat; Map pp274-5; % 93 442 31 06; www.lasgolondrinas.com; Moll de les Drassanes; trips adult/4-10yr/under 4yr €7.50/2/free) from in front of the Monument a Colom. The one-hour round trip takes you to Port Olímpic, the Fórum and back again. The number of departures depends largely on season and demand. As a rule the trips are only done between March and November. Otherwise you can opt for a 35-minute excursion (adult/child aged four to 10/child under four €4/2/free) to the breakwater and back. Neither trip is particularly exciting, but pleasant enough.

Northeast from the quay stretches the promenade Moll de la Fusta. Usually the Pailebot de Santa Eulàlia (Map pp274-5; Moll de la Fusta; adult/child €2.40/1.20; h noon-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun), a fully functioning 1918 schooner restored by the Museu Marítim, is moored here for visits, although sometimes it's off on the high seas. Admission is free with a Museu Marítim ticket.

At the centre of the redeveloped harbour is the Moll d'Espanya, a former wharf linked to Moll de la Fusta by a wave-shaped footbridge, Rambla de Mar (Map pp274-5), which rotates to let boats enter the marina behind it. At the end of Moll d'Espanya is the glossy Maremàgnum shopping and eating complex, but the major attraction is L'Aquàrium (Map pp274-5; % 93 221 74 74; www.aquariumbcn.com; Maremàgnum; adult/over 60yr/4-12yr/under 4yr €15/12/10/free; h 9.30am-11pm Jul-Aug, 9.30am-9.30pm Jun & Sep, 9.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-9.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-May; √), with its 80m-long shark tunnel. Short of diving among them (which can actually be arranged here too) this is as close as you can get to a set of shark teeth without being bitten. Beyond L'Aquàrium is the big-screen Imax cinema.

La Barceloneta & the Coast

It used to be said that Barcelona had 'turned its back on the sea', but the ambitious 1992 Olympics-inspired redevelopment programme returned a long stretch of coast northeast of Port Vell to life. A similar programme is turning the city's long abandoned extreme northeast coastline around too.

La Barceloneta, laid out in the 18th century and subsequently heavily overdeveloped, was

long a factory-workers' and fishermen's quarter. It still retains a gritty flavour although the factories are a distant memory and there are unmistakable signs of gentrification. Some of the fishing families remain and the area is laced with seafood restaurants.

In the Palau de Mar building (former warehouses) facing the harbour is the Museu d'Història de Catalunya (Map pp274-5; % 93 225 47 00; www.mhcat.net; Plaça de Pau Vila 3; admission €3; h 10am-7pm Tue & Thu-Sat, 10am-8pm Wed, 10am-2.30pm Sun & holidays; √). The place incorporates lots of audiovisuals and interactive information points in a series of colourful displays, recounting Catalonia's tumultuous past from pre-history to the 1980s. All sorts of scenes are recreated, from a prehistoric Pyrenean cave dwelling, through to a Roman house and a Spanish-civil-war air-raid shelter. It's free on the first Sunday of the month.

Barcelona's fishing fleet ties up along the Moll del Relotge, south of the museum. On La Barceloneta's seaward side are the first of Barcelona's beaches, which are popular on summer weekends. The pleasant Passeig Marítim (Map pp268-9), a 1.25km promenade from La Barceloneta to Port Olímpic, is a haunt for strollers and rollers, so bring your Rollerblades.

The Transbordador Aeri (Cable Car; Map pp268-9; Passeig Escullera; one way/return €7.50/9; h 11am-8pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 10.45am-7pm Mar-mid-Jun & mid-Sep-late-Oct, 10am-6pm late-Oct-Feb), strung across the harbour to Montjuïc, provides a seagull's view of the city. Get tickets at Miramar (Map pp268-9) in Montjuïc and the Torre de Sant Sebastià (Map pp274-5) in La Barceloneta. Buses 17, 39, 55 and 64 run to the Torre de Sant Sebastià.

Port Olímpic (Map pp268-9), a busy marina built for the Olympic sailing events, is surrounded by bars and restaurants. An eye-catcher, on the approach from La Barceloneta, is Frank Gehry's giant copper Peix (Fish, Map pp268-9) sculpture.

The area behind Port Olímpic, dominated by twin-tower blocks (the luxury Hotel Arts Barcelona and Torre Mapfre office block), is the former Vila Olímpica living quarters for the Olympic competitors, which has since been sold off as apartments.

More and better beaches stretch northeast along the coast from Port Olímpic. They reach the largely completed development project known variously as Diagonal Mar and Fórum.

MODERNISME UNPACKED

Aficionados of Barcelona's Modernista heritage should consider the Ruta del Modernisme pack. For €12 you receive a guide to 115 Modernista buildings great and small, a map and discounts of up to 50% on the main Modernista sights in Barcelona, as well as some in other municipalities around Catalonia. The discounts are valid for a year. For €18, you get another guide and map, *Sortim*, which leads you to bars and restaurants located in Modernista buildings around the city. The *Ruta del Modernisme* guide (in various languages) is available in bookstores. You can take it to one of three Centres del Modernisme to obtain the discount cards, or buy the lot at those centres. They are located at the **Oficina d'Informació de Turisme de Barcelona** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 285 38 34; www.barcelonaturisme.com; Plaça de Catalunya 17-S underground; ⌚ 9am-9pm), the **Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 902 076621; www.santpau.es; Carrer de Cartagena; ✓✓) and the **Pavellons Güell** (Map pp268-9; p297; ☎ 902 076621; Pedralbes).

Aside from high-rise hotels and apartment blocks looking out to sea, highlights include the protected swimming area, a new marina, kids' playgrounds, good spots for rollerblading and skating, and the weird, triangular Edifici Fòrum building. The building is home to a permanent display on urban plans for Barcelona (Barcelona Propera) and occasional temporary exhibitions. Eventually the city zoo will be relocated to a waterfront position here too.

L'Eixample

Stretching north, east and west of Plaça de Catalunya, L'Eixample (the Extension) was Barcelona's 19th-century answer to overcrowding in the medieval city.

Work on it began in 1869, following a design by architect Ildefons Cerdà, who specified a grid of wide streets with plazas that were formed by their cut-off corners. Cerdà also planned numerous public green spaces but few survived the ensuing scramble for real estate. Only now are some being recreated in the interior of some blocks.

L'Eixample has been inhabited from the start by the city's middle classes, many of whom still think it's the best thing about Barcelona. Along its grid of straight streets are the majority of the city's most expensive shops and hotels, plus a range of eateries and several concentrations of bars and clubs. The development of L'Eixample coincided with the city's Modernisme period and so it's home to many Modernista creations. These constitute the area's main sightseeing attractions and, apart from La Sagrada Família, the principal ones are clustered on or near L'Eixample's main avenue, Passeig de Gràcia.

CASA BATLLÓ & THE MANZANA DE LA DISCORDIA

If La Sagrada Família is his master symphony, the **Casa Batlló** (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 216 03 06; www.casabatllo.es; Passeig de Gràcia 43; adult/student & senior €16.50/13; ⌚ 9am-8pm) is Gaudí's whimsical waltz. The façade, sprinkled with bits of blue, mauve and green tile, and studded with wave-shaped window frames and balconies, rises to an uneven blue-tiled roof with a solitary tower. The roof represents Sant Jordi (St George) and the dragon, and if you stare long enough at the building, it almost seems a living being. Inside the main salon overlooking Passeig de Gràcia everything swirls. The ceiling is twisted into a vortex around a sun-like lamp. The doors, windows and skylights are dreamy waves of wood and coloured glass. The same themes continue in the other rooms and covered terrace. The roof, with its twisting chimneypots, is equally astonishing, and provides a chance for a close-up look at the St George-and-the-dragon motif that dominates the view from the street.

Casa Batlló is the centrepiece of the so-called **Manzana de la Discòrdia** (Apple of Discord – in a play on words, *manzana* means both city block and apple), on the western side of Passeig de Gràcia, between Carrer del Consell de Cent and Carrer d'Aragó. According to Greek myth, the original Apple of Discord was tossed onto Mt Olympus by Eris (Discord) with orders that it be given to the most beautiful goddess, sparking jealousies that helped start the Trojan War.

On the same block are two utterly different houses (hence the discord) by the other two senior figures of Modernista architecture: Lluís Domènech i Montaner's **Casa Lleó Morera**

(Map pp272-3; Passeig de Gràcia 35), which is closed to the public; and **Casa Amatller** (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 487 72 17; www.amatller.org; Passeig de Gràcia 41; admission free; ⌚ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) by Josep Puig i Cadafalch. The former is swathed in Art Nouveau carving on the outside and has a bright, tiled lobby, in which floral motifs predominate. The latter is altogether different, with Gothic-style window frames, a stepped gable borrowed (deliberately) from the urban architecture of the Netherlands and all sorts of unlikely sculptures and busts jutting out. The pillared foyer (which you can enter) and the staircase lit by stained glass are like the inside of some romantic castle. Exhibitions are held out the back and parts of the building might be opened to the public in the near future. All three buildings were completed between 1898 and 1906.

The **Museu del Perfum** (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 216 01 21; www.museodelperfume.com; Passeig de Gràcia 39; adult/student & senior €5/3; ⌚ 10.30am-2pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat), in the Regia store, contains everything from ancient scent receptacles to classic eau de Cologne bottles.

FUNDACIÓ ANTONI TÀPIES

Around the corner from the **Manzana de la Discòrdia**, the **Fundació** (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 487 03 15; www.fundaciotapies.org; Carrer d'Aragó 255; adult/student €4.20/2.10; ⌚ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun; ✓✓) is a pioneering Modernista building of the early 1880s, and a homage to, and by, a leading 20th-century Catalan artist. The collection spans

the arc of Tàpies' creations (with more than 800 works) but only a small portion is ever on show, always in conjunction with several other temporary exhibitions. In the main exhibition area (Level 1, upstairs) you can see an ever-changing selection of about a dozen of Tàpies' later and grander works, often mystifying creations. For a historical perspective, head for the basement Level 3, where you'll find drawings and colourful canvases from the 1940s and 1950s.

LA PEDRERA

Back on Passeig de Gràcia is another Gaudí masterpiece, built between 1905 and 1910 as a combined apartment and office block. Formally called the **Casa Milà**, after the businessman who commissioned it, it's better known as **La Pedrera** (The Quarry; Map pp272-3; ☎ 902 400973; www.fundacioaixacatalunya.es; Carrer de Provença 261-265; adult/student & EU senior €8/4.50; ⌚ 10am-8pm) because of its uneven grey-stone façade, which ripples around the corner of Carrer de Provença. The wave effect is emphasised by elaborate wrought-iron balconies.

Visit the lavish top-floor flat, attic and roof, together known as the **Espai Gaudí** (Gaudí Space). The roof is the most extraordinary element, with its giant chimneypots looking like multicoloured medieval knights. One floor below, where you can appreciate Gaudí's gracious parabolic arches, is a modest museum dedicated to his work. You can see models and videos dealing with each of his buildings.

THE MODERNISTAS' MISSION

Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926), known above all for La Sagrada Família, was just one, albeit the most spectacular, of a generation of inventive architects who left an indelible mark on Barcelona between 1880 and the 1920s. They were called the Modernistas.

The local offshoot of the Europe-wide phenomenon of Art Nouveau, Modernisme was characterised by its taste for sinuous, flowing lines and (for the time) adventurous combinations of materials like tile, glass, brick, iron and steel. But Barcelona's Modernistas were also inspired by an astonishing variety of other styles too: Gothic and Islamic, Renaissance and Romanesque, Byzantine and baroque.

Gaudí and Co were trying to create a specifically Catalan architecture, often looking back to Catalonia's medieval golden age for inspiration. It is no coincidence that Gaudí and the two other leading Modernista architects, Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1850–1923) and Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867–1957), were prominent Catalan nationalists.

L'Eixample, where most of Barcelona's new building was happening at the time, is home to the bulk of the Modernista creations. Others in the city include Gaudí's **Palau Güell** (p288) and **Park Güell** (p295); Domènech i Montaner's **Palau de la Música Catalana** (p289); **Castell dels Tres Dragons** (p290) and the **Hotel España** restaurant (p314); and Puig i Cadafalch's **Els Quatre Gats** (see boxed text, p318).

Downstairs on the next floor the apartment (El Pis de la Pedrera) spreads out. It is fascinating to wander around this elegantly furnished home, done up in the style a well-to-do family might have enjoyed in the early 20th century.

From mid-June to late July, La Pedrera opens on Friday and Saturday evenings (9.30pm to midnight). The roof is lit in an eerie fashion and, while you are taking in the night views you can also sip a flute of *cava* (the Catalan version of champagne) and listen to live music (€10). Book in advance.

PALAU DEL BARÓ QUADRAS & CASA DE LES PUNXES

A few blocks north and east of La Pedrera are two of Puig i Cadafalch's major buildings. **Palau del Baró Quadras** (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 238 73 37; www.casaasia.es; Avinguda Diagonal 373; 10am-8pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) was built between 1902 and 1904 with fantastical neo-Gothic carvings on the façade and a fine stained-glass gallery. It houses Casa Asia, an Asia-Pacific cultural centre. Visiting the varied temporary exhibitions allows you to get a peek at the inside of this intriguing building, which is full of surprising Oriental themes.

Nearby Casa Terrades is better known as **Casa de les Punxes** (House of Spikes; Map pp272-3; Avinguda Diagonal 420) because of its pointed, witch's hat turrets. This apartment block (1903-05) looks more like a fairy-tale castle.

FUNDACIÓ FRANCISCO GODIA

Francisco Godia (1921-90) put together the intriguing mix of medieval art, ceramics and modern paintings at the **Fundació** (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 272 31 80; www.fundacionfgodia.org; Carrer de València 284; adult/student & senior/under 5yr €4.50/2.10 /free; 10am-8pm Wed-Mon; √) in a lifetime of collecting. Godia's interests ranged from the Neapolitan baroque painter Luca Giordano through to Catalan Modernism and València's Joaquim Sorolla, not to mention fast cars.

LA SAGRADA FAMÍLIA

If you only have time for one sightseeing outing, this should be it. The **Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família** (Expiatory Temple of the Holy Family; Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 207 30 31; www.sagradafamilia.org; Carrer de Mallorca 401; adult/student €8/5, with Casa Museu Gaudí in Park Güell €9; 9am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Mar) inspires awe with its sheer verticality and, in the true manner of the great medieval

cathedrals it emulates, it's still not finished after more than 100 years. Work is proceeding apace, however, and it might be done by the 2020s. The first Mass may be celebrated as soon as 2008, if the roof is completed on time. It is Spain's most visited monument and you could easily spend a couple of hours here.

The church was the project to which Antoni Gaudí dedicated the latter part of his life. He stuck to a basic Gothic cross-shaped ground plan, but devised a temple 95m long and 60m wide, which was able to seat 13,000 people. The completed sections and the museum can be explored at leisure. Guided tours (€3.50, 50 minutes, up to four daily) are offered. You can enter from Carrer de Sardanya and Carrer de la Marina. Audio-guides (€3.50) are available and it costs a further €2 per ride on the lifts that take you up inside one of the towers on each side of the church.

The northeast, or **Nativity Façade**, is the Sagrada Família's artistic pinnacle, and was mostly done under Gaudí's personal supervision. You can climb high up inside some of the four towers by a combination of lifts and narrow spiral staircases – a vertiginous experience. The towers are destined to hold tubular bells capable of playing complicated music at great volume. Beneath the towers is a tall, three-part portal on the theme of Christ's birth and childhood. It seems to lean outwards as you stand beneath, looking up. Gaudí used real people and animals as models for many of the sculptures, along with the occasional corpse from the local morgue! The three sections of the portal represent, from left to right, Hope, Charity and Faith. Among the forest of sculpture on the Charity portal, you can make out, low down, the manger surrounded by an ox, an ass, the shepherds and kings, with angel musicians above.

The southwest **Passion Façade**, which has the theme of Christ's last days and death, has been constructed since the 1950s with, like the Nativity Façade, four needling towers and a large, sculpture-bedecked portal. The sculptor, Josep Subirachs, has not attempted to imitate Gaudí's work but has produced controversial (people like 'em or loath 'em), angular images of his own. The sculptures, on three levels, are in an S-shaped sequence, starting with the Last Supper at bottom left and ending with Christ's burial at top right. Subirachs continues to add elements to the façade today.

The semicircular **apse** was the first part to be finished (in 1894). The interior of the church remains a building site but the nave has been roofed over, and a forest of extraordinary angled pillars is in place. The image of the tree is in no way fortuitous, for Gaudí's plan envisaged such an effect.

Work has begun on the **Glory Façade**. It will, like the others, be crowned by four towers – the total of 12 representing the 12 apostles. Further decoration will make the whole building a microcosmic symbol of the Christian church, with Christ represented by a massive 170m central tower above the transept, and the five remaining planned towers symbolising the Virgin Mary and the four Evangelists.

Open the same times as the church, the **Museu Gaudí** (Map pp272-3), below ground level, includes interesting material on Gaudí's life and other work, as well as models and photos of La Sagrada Família. You can see a good example of his plumb-line models, which showed him the stresses and strains he could get away with in construction. Gaudí is buried in the simple crypt at the far end.

HOSPITAL DE LA SANTA CREU I DE SANT PAU

Domènec i Montaner excelled himself as architect and philanthropist with the Modernista masterpiece **Hospital de la Santa Creu i de Sant Pau** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 902 076621; www.santpau.es; Carrer de Cartagena; √), long one of the city's most important hospitals. The whole complex (a World Heritage site), including 16 pavilions, is lavishly decorated and each pavilion is unique. Among the many artists who contributed statuary, ceramics and artwork was the prolific Eusebi Arnau. You can wander around the grounds at any time, and it's well worth the stroll up Avinguda de Gaudí from La Sagrada Família.

The hospital facilities are gradually being transferred to new grounds nearby. Part of the historic site will become a museum dedicated to Montaner, medicine and the 600-year history of the hospital (which was first established in El Raval in the early 15th century; see p288), but not before 2009. You can join a guided tour for €5 (10.15am and 12.15pm in English, 11.15am in Catalan and 1.15pm in Spanish).

TORRE AGBAR

Jean Nouvel's glimmering cucumber-shaped **tower** (Map pp268-9; Avinguda Diagonal 225; √) has come to share the skyline limelight with La

Sagrada Família, and it is now the most visible landmark in the city. By the end of 2006 you should be able to head to a panoramic viewing floor and restaurant high up in the building.

Gràcia

Gràcia lies north of L'Eixample. Once a separate village and in the 19th century an industrial district famous for its republican and liberal ideas, it became fashionable among radical and bohemian types in the 1960s and '70s. Now more sedate and gentrified, it retains much of its style of 20 years ago, with a mixed-class population and very Catalan air. Gràcia's interest lies in the atmosphere of its narrow streets, small plazas and the multitude of bars and restaurants.

The liveliest plazas are **Plaça del Sol**, **Plaça de Rius i Taulet** with its **clock tower** (a favourite meeting place) and **Plaça de la Virreina** with the 17th-century **Església de Sant Joan** (Map pp272-3). Three blocks northeast of **Plaça de Rius i Taulet** there's a big covered market, the **Mercat del Abaceria** (Map pp272-3). West of Gràcia's main street, **Carrer Gran de Gràcia**, seek out an early Gaudí house, the turreted, vaguely Mudéjar **Casa Vicenç** (Map pp272-3; Carrer de les Carolines 22). It's not open to the public.

Park Güell

North of Gràcia, **Park Güell** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 413 24 00; Carrer d'Olot 7; admission free; 10am-9pm Jun-Sep, 10am-8pm Apr, May & Oct, 10am-7pm Mar & Nov, 10am-6pm Dec-Feb) is where Gaudí turned his hand to landscape gardening, and the artificial almost seems more natural than the natural.

Park Güell originated in 1900 when Count Eusebi Güell bought a hillside property (then outside Barcelona) and hired Gaudí to create a miniature garden city of houses for the wealthy. The project was abandoned in 1914, but not before Gaudí had created 3km of roads and walks, steps and a plaza in his inimitable manner, plus the two Hansel-and-Gretel-style gatehouses on Carrer d'Olot.

Just inside the entrance, visit the park's visitor centre, **Centre d'Acollida** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 285 68 99; adult/student/under 16yr €2/1.50/free; 11am-3pm), in the **Pavelló de Consergeria**, the one-time porter's home that now hosts a display on Gaudí's building methods. For €4 you get entry here and to the **Museu d'Història de la Ciutat** (p287) and the **Museu-Monestir de Pedralbes** (p297).

The steps up from the entrance, guarded by a mosaic dragon-lizard, lead to the **Sala Hipòstila**, a forest of 84 stone columns (some of them leaning), intended as a market. On top of the Sala Hipòstila is a broad open space; its highlight is the **Banc de Trencadís**, a tiled bench curving sinuously around its perimeter, which was designed by Gaudí's right-hand man, Josep Maria Jujol (1879–1949).

The spired house to the right is the **Casa-Museu Gaudí** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 219 38 11; admission €4; 10am-8pm Apr-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Mar), where Gaudí lived for most of his last 20 years (1906–26). It contains furniture by him and other memorabilia. Bus 24 drops you at an entrance near the top of the park.

Tibidabo

Tibidabo (512m) is the highest hill in the wooded range that forms the backdrop to Barcelona. It's a good place for some fresh air and fine views. Tibidabo gets its name from the devil, who, trying to tempt Christ, took him to a high place and said, in the Latin version: *'Haec omnia tibi dabo si cadens adoraberis me.'* ('All this I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.')

TEMPLE DEL SAGRAT COR

The **Church of the Sacred Heart** (☎ 93 417 56 86; Plaça de Tibidabo; 10am-7pm), looming above the top funicular station, is meant to be Barcelona's answer to Paris' Sacré Coeur. It's certainly equally as visible, and even more vilified by aesthetes (perhaps with good reason). It's actually two churches, one on top of the other. The top one is surmounted by a giant Christ and has a lift to the roof (tickets €2; 10am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Sun).

PARC D'ATRACCIONS

Barcelonins (residents of Barcelona) come to Tibidabo for a bit of fresh air at this **funfair** (☎ 93 211 79 42; www.tibidabo.es; Plaça de Tibidabo 3-4; admission for 6 attractions & Museu d'Automats €11, admission all rides adult/child shorter than 1.2m €22/9). Give yourself a bit of a scare in the Hotel Krueger, a *hospedaje* (guesthouse) of horrors inhabited by actors playing out their Dracula, Hannibal Lecter and other fantasies. A curious sideline is the Museu d'Automats, with 35 automated puppets that go back as far as 1880 and are part of the original amusement park. You can still see some of these gizmos go. The park is open from noon to 10pm or 11pm Wednesday to

Sunday from July to early September. At other times, closing times vary enormously (from 5pm to 9pm) Saturday, Sunday, holidays and some other days in warmer months.

COSMOCAIXA – MUSEU DE LA CIÈNCIA

Located in a transformed Modernista building, this **science museum** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 212 60 50; www.fundacio.lacaixa.es; Carrer de Teodor Roviralta 47-51, Zona Alta; adult/student €3/2; 10am-8pm Tue-Sun; √) is a giant interactive paradise with knobs (and buttons and levers and lots more besides). Among the star attractions are the planetarium and the re-creation over 1 sq km of a chunk of flooded Amazon rainforest (*Bosc Inundat*), with more than 100 species of Amazon flora and fauna (including anacondas and poisonous frogs). The museum was voted Europe's best in 2006.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take a Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC) train to Avinguda de Tibidabo from Catalunya station on Plaça de Catalunya (€1.20, 10 minutes). Outside Avinguda de Tibidabo station, hop on the *tramvia blau*, Barcelona's last surviving old-style tram. It runs between fancy Modernista mansions – note particularly **Casa Roviralta** (Map pp268-9; Avinguda de Tibidabo 31), now home to a well-known grill restaurant – and Plaça del Doctor Andreu (one way/return €2.30/3.50; operating 10am to 8pm late June to early September, 10am to 6pm Saturday, Sunday and holidays mid-September to late-June) – it has been doing so since 1901. The tram runs every 15 or 30 minutes. On days and at times when the tram does not operate, a bus serves the route (€1.20).

From Plaça del Doctor Andreu, the Tibidabo funicular railway climbs through the woods to Plaça de Tibidabo at the top of the hill (one way/return €2/3). Departures start at 10.45am and continue until shortly after the park's closing time.

An alternative is bus T2, the 'Tibibús', from Plaça de Catalunya to Plaça de Tibidabo (€2.20). It runs every 30 to 50 minutes on Saturday, Sunday and holidays year-round, and hourly from 10.30am Monday to Friday late June to early September; you purchase tickets on the bus. The last bus down leaves Tibidabo 30 minutes after the Parc d'Atraccions closes. You can also buy a combined ticket that includes the bus and entry to the Parc d'Atraccions (€22).

Collserola

PARC DE COLLSEROLA

Stretching over 8000ha, this **park** (☎ 93 280 35 52; www.parccollserola.net; Carretera de l'Església 92; Centre d'Interpretació 10 9.30am-3pm) makes an ideal escape hatch from the city, with ample walking and mountain biking possibilities. Aside from the nature, the principal point of interest is the sprawling **Museu-Casa Verdaguier** (☎ 93 204 78 05; www.museuhistoria.bcn.es; Vil.la Joana, Carretera de l'Església 104; admission free; 10am-2pm Sat & Sun & holidays), 100m from the information centre and a short walk from the train station. In this late-18th-century country house, Catalonia's revered and reverend writer, Jacint Verdaguier, spent his last days before dying on 10 July 1902.

To get to the park, take the FGC train from Plaça de Catalunya to Peu de Funicular and then the Funicular to Baixador de Vallvidrera.

TORRE DE COLLSEROLA

The 288m **Torre de Collserola** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 406 93 54; www.torredecollserola.com; Carretera de Vallvidrera al Tibidabo; adult/senior/child €5.20/4.20/3.60; 11am-2.30pm & 3.30-7pm Wed-Sun) telecommunications tower was completed by Norman Foster in 1992. An external glass lift whisks you up 115m to the visitors' observation area, from where you can see for 70km on a clear day. Take bus 111 from Funicular de Vallvidrera or from Plaça de Tibidabo.

Jardins del Laberint d'Horta

Laid out in the twilight years of the 18th century by Antoni Desvalls, Marquès d'Alfarras i de Lluçà, this carefully manicured **park** (☎ 93 428 39 34; Carrer dels Germans Desvalls; adult/student €2/1.25, free Wed & Sun; 10am-sunset) remained a private family idyll until the 1970s, when it was opened to the public. Many a fine party and theatrical performance was held here over the years, but now it serves as a kind of museum-park. The gardens take their name from a maze (which is very easy to get lost in!) in their centre, but other paths take you past a pleasant artificial lake or *estany*, waterfalls, a neoclassical pavilion and a false cemetery. The latter was inspired by 19th-century romanticism, often characterised by an obsession with a swooning, anaemic (some might say plain silly) vision of death. To get to the park, take the metro to Mundet.

Pedralbes

This is a wealthy residential area north of the Zona Universitària.

PALAU REIAL DE PEDRALBES

Across Avinguda Diagonal from the main campus of the Universitat de Barcelona, set in a lush, green park is the 20th-century **Palau Reial de Pedralbes** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 280 50 24; Avinguda Diagonal 686; both museums & the Museu Tèxtil i d'Indumentària adult/student €3.50/2; 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun & holidays, park 10am-6pm), which belonged to the family of Eusebi Güell (Gaudí's patron) until they handed it over to the city in 1926. Then it served as a royal residence – King Alfonso XIII, the president of Catalonia and General Franco, among others, have been its guests. It's free on the first Sunday of the month and the ticket also gets you into the Museu Tèxtil i d'Indumentària (p289).

Today the palace houses two museums. The **Museu de Ceràmica** (www.museuceramica.bcn.es) has a good collection of Spanish ceramics from the 13th to 19th centuries, including work by Picasso and Miró. Across the corridor, the **Museu de les Arts Decoratives** (www.museuartsdecoratives.bcn.es) brings together an eclectic assortment of furnishings, ornaments, and knick-knacks dating as far back as the Romanesque period.

Over by Avinguda de Pedralbes are the Gaudí-designed stables and porter's lodge for the Finca Güell, as the Güell estate here was called. They were built in the mid-1880s, when Gaudí was strongly impressed by Islamic architecture, and are also known as the **Pavellons Güell** (☎ 902 076621; guided tour adult/child & senior €5/2.50). There are tours Monday to Friday in English at 10.15am and 12.15pm, and there are also tours in Catalan (11.15am) and Spanish (1.15pm). Outside visiting hours, there is nothing to stop you admiring Gaudí's wrought-iron dragon gate from the outside.

MUSEU-MONESTIR DE PEDRALBES

This peaceful old **convent** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 203 92 82; www.museuhistoria.bcn.es; Baixada del Monestir 9; admission €4 incl Museu d'Història de la Ciutat & Park Güell Centre d'Interpretació; 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-2pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Oct-May), founded in 1326 and now a museum of monastic life, stands at the top of Avinguda de Pedralbes in a divinely quiet corner of

Barcelona. Displays are distributed in cells and dependencies around the elegant, three-storey cloister, a jewel of early-14th-century Catalan Gothic.

Upstairs is a grand hall that was once the **Dormidor**, or sleeping quarters. It was lined by tiny night cells but they were long ago removed. Today, a modest collection of the monastery's art, especially Gothic devotional works, and furniture grace this space.

Take the FGC train to Reina Elisenda or bus 22 (from Plaça de Catalunya), 64 (from Plaça de l'Universitat) or 75 (from Plaça de Kennedy).

Camp Nou

One of Barcelona's most visited museums is the **Museu del Futbol Club Barcelona** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 496 36 08; www.fcbarcelona.es; Carrer d'Aristides Maillol; adult/child €6/4.50; ⌚ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun & holidays), next to the club's giant Camp Nou stadium. Barça is one of Europe's top football clubs and its museum is a hit with fans the world over, more so since the side won the Spanish premiership and the European Champion's League in 2006.

Camp Nou, built in 1957, is one of the world's biggest stadiums, holding 100,000 people, and the club has a world-record membership of 130,000. Soccer fans who can't get to a game (see p328) should find the museum worthwhile. The best bits are the photo section, goal videos and views over the stadium. Among the quirkiest paraphernalia are old sports board games, the life-size diorama of old-time dressing rooms, magazines from way back, and the *futbolín* (table-soccer) collection. You can join a guided tour (adult/child €10.50/8; ⌚ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun & holidays) of the stadium, starting in the team's dressing rooms (pong!) then heading out through the tunnel, on to the pitch and winding up in the presidential box.

Montjuïc

Montjuïc, the hill overlooking the city centre from the southwest, is dotted with museums, soothing gardens and the main group of 1992 Olympic sites, along with a handful of theatres and clubs. It's worth at least a day of your time.

The name Montjuïc (Jewish Mountain) indicates there was once a Jewish cemetery, and possibly settlement, here. Montjuïc also has a darker history: its castle was used as a

political prison and execution site by various governments, including the Republicans during the civil war and Franco thereafter.

The first main burst of building on Montjuïc came in the 1920s, when it was chosen as the stage for Barcelona's 1929 World Exhibition. The Estadi Olímpic, the Poble Espanyol and some museums all date from this time. Montjuïc got a face-lift and more new buildings for the 1992 Olympics, and cosmetic surgery on the gardens continues today.

Abundant roads and paths, with occasional escalators, plus buses and a chairlift, allow you to visit Montjuïc's sights in any order you choose. The main attractions – the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, CaixaForum, the Poble Espanyol, the Pavelló Mies van der Rohe, the Fundació Joan Miró, the Estadi Olímpic and the views from the castle – make for a full couple of days' sightseeing.

For information on the park, head for the **Centre Gestor del Parc de Montjuïc** (Passeig de Santa Madrona 28; ⌚ 10am-8pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar) in the Font del Gat building, a short walk off Passeig de Santa Madrona, east of the Museu Etnològic. It also has a pleasant bar-restaurant. Another information office, open the same hours, operates at the castle (see p309).

AROUND PLAÇA D'ESPANYA

The approach to Montjuïc from Plaça d'Espanya gives you the full benefit of the landscaping on the hill's northern side and allows Montjuïc to unfold for you from the bottom up. On Plaça d'Espanya's northern side is the former **Plaça de Braus Les Arenes bullring**, built in 1900 and being converted into a shopping and leisure centre by Sir Richard Rogers.

Behind the bullring is **Parc Joan Miró**, created in the 1980s, and worth a quick detour for Miró's giant, highly phallic sculpture *Donna i Ocell* (Woman and Bird, Map pp268-9) in the northwest corner.

LA FONT MÀGICA & AROUND

Avinguda de la Reina Maria Cristina, lined with exhibition and congress halls, leads from Plaça d'Espanya towards Montjuïc. On the hill ahead of you is the Palau Nacional de Montjuïc, and stretching up a series of terraces below it are Montjuïc's fountains, starting with the biggest, **La Font Màgica** (Map pp268-9; Avinguda de la Reina Maria Cristina; admission free; ⌚ every 30min 7-8.30pm Fri & Sat Oct-late Jun, 9.30-11.30pm Thu-Sun late Jun-Sep), which comes alive with a

15-minute lights-water-and-music show repeated several times an evening.

Just to the west of La Font Màgica is the strange **Pavelló Mies van der Rohe** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 423 40 16; www.miesbcn.com; Avinguda del Marquès de Comillas; adult/student/under 18yr €3.50/2/free; ⌚ 10am-8pm; √). Architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe erected the Pavelló Alemany (German Pavilion) for the 1929 World Exhibition. It was a startling modern experiment. What you see now is a replica erected by an association of his fans in the 1980s.

CaixaForum (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 476 86 00; www.fundacio.lacaixa.es in Spanish; Avinguda del Marquès de Comillas 6-8; admission free; ⌚ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun; √) hosts part of the Caixa bank's extensive collection of modern art from around the globe. It is housed in a remarkable former Modernista factory designed by Puig i Cadafalch. Constantly changing exhibitions are generally top quality.

MUSEU NACIONAL D'ART DE CATALUNYA

The **Palau Nacional**, built in the 1920s for World Exhibition displays, houses what is probably the city's most important museum (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 622 03 76; www.mnac.es; Mirador del Palau Nacional; adult/student/senior & under 12yr €8.50/6/free; ⌚ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun & holidays; √). Its Romanesque art section consists mainly of 11th- and 12th-century murals, woodcarvings and altar frontals – painted, low-relief wooden panels that were forerunners of the elaborate *retablos* (altarpieces) that adorned later churches. Gathered from decaying rural churches in northern Catalonia early last century, they form one of Europe's greatest collections of Romanesque art. The two outstanding items are an image of Christ in majesty done around 1123 and taken from the apse of the Església de Sant Climent de Taüll in northwest Catalonia, and an apse image of the Virgin Mary and Christ child from the nearby Església de Santa Maria de Taüll.

The extensive Gothic-art section contains works by Catalan painters such as Bernat Martorell and Jaume Huguet. From here you pass through two eclectic private collections, the Cambò bequest and works from the Thyssen-Bornemisza collections. Works by the Venetian Renaissance masters Veronese (1528-88), Titian (1490-1557) and Canaletto (1697-1768), along with Rubens (1577-1640) and even England's Gainsborough (1727-88), feature.

Upstairs, after a series of minor works by a variety of classic 17th-century Spanish Old Masters, the collection turns to modern

Catalan art. It is an uneven affair, but it is worth looking out for Modernista painters Ramon Casas and Santiago Rusiñol.

The photography section encompasses work from mostly Catalan snappers from the mid-19th century on. The Gabinet Numismàtic de Catalunya contains coins ranging from Roman Spain and medieval Catalonia to some engaging notes from civil war days.

POBLE ESPANYOL

This so-called **Spanish Village** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 508 63 30; www.poble-espanyol.com; Avinguda del Marquès de Comillas; adult/senior & student/under 12yr €7.50/5.50/4; ⌚ 9am-8pm Mon, 9am-2am Tue-Thu, 9am-4am Fri & Sat, 9am-midnight Sun) is both a cheesy souvenir-hunters' haunt and an intriguing scrapbook of Spanish architecture. Built for the Spanish crafts section of the 1929 exhibition, it's composed of plazas and streets lined with surprisingly good copies of characteristic buildings from across the country's regions.

You enter from Avinguda del Marquès de Comillas, beneath a towered medieval gate from Àvila. Inside, to the right, is an information office with free maps. Straight ahead from the gate is a Plaza Mayor, or town square, surrounded by mainly Castilian and Aragonese buildings. Elsewhere you'll find an Andalusian *barrio* (district), a Basque street, Galician and Catalan quarters, and even – at the eastern end – a small Dominican monastery. The buildings house dozens of moderate-to-expensive restaurants, cafés, bars, craft shops and workshops, and a few souvenir stores.

The **Fundació Fran Daurel** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 423 41 72; admission free; ⌚ 10am-7pm) is an eclectic collection of 200 works of art including sculptures, prints, ceramics and tapestries by artists ranging from Picasso to Miquel Barceló.

MUSEU ETNOLÒGIC & MUSEU D'ARQUEOLOGIA

Down the hill east of the Museu Nacional d'Art, these museums are worth a visit if their subjects interest you, although neither is excitingly presented and most explanatory material is in Catalan.

The **Museu Etnològic** (Ethnology Museum; Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 424 64 02; www.museuetnologic.bcn.es; Passeig de Santa Madrona; adult/senior & student/under 12yr €3/1.50/free; ⌚ noon-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun late Jun-late Sep, 10am-7pm Tue & Thu, 10am-2pm Wed, Fri & Sun late-Sep-late-Jun) presents a wide-ranging, three-part exhibition with all sorts of traditional

objects collected across Spain and around the world: anything from Australian boomerangs to ceramics from Andalucía. It's free on the first Sunday of the month.

The **Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya** (Archaeology Museum; Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 424 65 77; www.mac.es; Passeig de Santa Madrona 39-41; adult/child €2.40/1.70; 11 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2.30pm Sun) covers Catalonia and neighbouring areas in Spain. Items range from copies of pre-Neanderthal skulls to Carthaginian necklaces and Visigothic crosses. There's good material on the Balearic Islands and Empúries and Roman finds dug up in Barcelona.

ANELLA OLÍMPICA

The 'Olympic Ring' is the group of sports installations where the main events of the 1992 Olympics were held. Westernmost is the Institut Nacional d'Educació Física de Catalunya (INEFC; Map pp268-9), a kind of sports university, designed by one of Catalonia's best-known contemporary architects, Ricardo Bofill. Past a circular arena, Plaça d'Europa, with the Torre Calatrava telephone tower behind it, is the Piscines Bernat Picornell (Map pp268-9), where the swimming and diving events were held. For details on swimming here, see p310.

Next comes a pleasant park, the Jardí d'Acclimatació, followed by the Estadi Olímpic (Map pp268-9; Avinguda de l'Estadi; admission free; 11 10am-6pm Oct-Apr, 10am-8pm May-Sep), the main stadium of the games (enter at the north end). If you saw the Olympics on TV, the 65,000-capacity stadium may seem surprisingly small. So may the Olympic flame-holder into which an archer spectacularly fired a flaming arrow during the opening ceremony. The stadium was opened in 1929, and restored for 1992.

At the southern end of the stadium (enter from the outside) is the Galeria Olímpica (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 426 06 60; www.fundaciobarcelonaolimpica.es; Passeig Olímpic s/n; adult/student/senior & under 12yr €3/1.50; 11 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri), which has an exhibition on the 1992 games.

West of the stadium is the Palau Sant Jordi (Map pp268-9), a 17,000-capacity indoor sports, concert and exhibition hall, designed by the Japanese architect Arata Isozaki.

JARDÍ BOTÀNIC

South across the road from the Estadi, this botanical garden (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 426 49 35; www.jardibotanic.bcn.es; Carrer del Doctor Font i Quer; adult/student €3/1.50; 11 10am-8pm Jul-Aug, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun & holidays Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Mar) was

created atop an old municipal dump. The theme is 'Mediterranean' flora and the collection includes some 2000 species thriving in areas with a climate similar to that of the Mediterranean, including the Eastern Med. Spain (including the Balearic and Canary Islands), North Africa, Australia, California, Chile and South Africa. It's free on the last Sunday of the month.

CEMENTIRI DEL SUD-OEST

On the hill south of the Anella Olímpica you can see the top of a huge cemetery, the Cementiri del Sud-Oest (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 484 17 00; 11 8am-5.30pm), which extends right down the south side of the hill. It was opened in 1883, and is an odd combination of elaborate architect-designed tombs for rich families and small niches for the rest. It contains the graves of numerous Catalan artists and politicians, including Joan Miró, Carmen Amaya (the flamenco star from La Barceloneta) and Lluís Companys (a nationalist president of Catalonia, who was executed by Franco's henchmen in the nearby Montjuïc castle in 1940).

FUNDACIÓ JOAN MIRÓ

The **Fundació Joan Miró** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 443 94 70; www.bcn.fjmiro.es; Plaça de Neptú; adult/senior & child €7.50/5, plus €4/3 for temporary exhibitions; 11 10am-7pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-9.30pm Thu, 10am-2.30pm Sun & holidays; ✓✓) is a must-see gallery dedicated to one of the greatest artists to emerge in Barcelona in the 20th century, Joan Miró.

The collections include some 450 paintings, sculptures and textile works, and almost 7000 drawings, but only a selection is shown at any one time. The displays tend to concentrate on Miró's more settled last 20 years, but there are some important exceptions. The Sala Joan Prats and Sala Pilar Juncosa show work by the younger Miró that traces him moving away slowly from a *relative* realism towards his own later signature style. Transitional works from the 1930s and '40s are especially intriguing. Another interesting section is devoted to the 'Miró Papers', which include many preparatory drawings and sketches, some on bits of newspaper or cigarette packets. A *Joan Miró* is a collection of work by other contemporary artists, donated in tribute to Miró and displayed in a basement room.

Reckon on a couple of hours to take in the permanent and temporary exhibitions.

(Continued on page 309)

(Continued from page 300)

CASTELL DE MONTJUÏC & AROUND

The southeast of Montjuïc is dominated by the castell (castle, Map pp268-9). For most of its existence it has been used to watch over the city and as a political prison and killing ground. The army opened it to the public as a museum in 1960, but the central government has yet to make good on a 2004 promise to cede the location to Barcelona city, which wants to create a European Peace Museum in it.

The castle is surrounded by a network of ditches and walls, and houses the **Museu Militar** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 329 86 13; admission €2.50; 11 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-mid-Mar, 9.30am-8pm daily mid-Mar-Oct), which has a section on Catalan military history, a discreetly half-hidden statue of Franco, plus old weapons, castle models and so on. Best of all are the views from the castle area of the port and city below. Make the charming walk along the base of the seaward walls, drinking in views of the city and the sea.

Towards the foot of this part of Montjuïc, above the main road to Tarragona, the **Jardins de Mossèn Costa i Llobera** (Map pp268-9; admission free; 11 10am-sunset) have a good collection of tropical and desert plants – including a veritable forest of cacti. Near the Estació Parc Montjuïc (funicular station) are the ornamental **Jardins de Mossèn Cinto Verdaguer**. From the **Jardins del Mirador**, opposite the Estació Mirador, you have fine views over the port of Barcelona.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

You *could* walk from Ciutat Vella (the foot of La Rambla is 700m from the eastern end of Montjuïc). Escalators run up to the Palau Nacional from Avinguda de Rius i Taulet and Passeig de les Cascades. They continue as far as Avinguda de l'Estadi.

Bus

Several buses make their way up here, including buses 50, 55 and 61. A local bus, the PM (Parc de Montjuïc) line, does a circle trip from Plaça d'Espanya to the castell.

Bus Montjuïc Turistic

This open-top, olive coloured bus (adult/child €3/2; 11 late Jun-mid-Sep) runs two hop-on, hop-off circuits (red and blue) around the park. Blue starts at Plaça d'Espanya and red at Plaça del Portal de la Pau (the Monument a Colom). There are 22 stops, five interconnecting the two routes.

Metro & Funicular

Take the metro (lines 2 and 3) to Paral.lel station and get on the funicular railway (11 9am-10pm Apr-Oct, 9am-8pm Nov-Mar) from there to Estació Parc Montjuïc.

Transbordador Aeri

To get to the mountain from the beach, take the Transbordador Aeri (Telefèric). It runs between Torre de Sant Sebastià in La Barceloneta (p291) and the Miramar stop on Montjuïc.

Telefèric de Montjuïc

From Estació Parc Montjuïc (see Metro & Funicular, above), this cable car goes to the castell via the Mirador (a lookout point). At the time of writing it was out of action for repairs.

ACTIVITIES

Cycling

For information on bicycle hire, see p332. Cycle lanes have been laid out along many main arteries across the city. Montjuïc and the Parc de Collserola are both hilly but less stressful than the rest of the city in terms of traffic.

Marathon

Runners converge on Barcelona annually to participate in the city's **marathon** (www.maratobarcelona.es); in 2006 it was held in March on a new course. It starts and finishes at Plaça d'Espanya, passing Camp Nou, La Pedrera, La Sagrada Família, Torre Agbar, Fórum, Parc de la Ciutadella, Plaça de Catalunya and La Rambla.

Rollerblading

The most popular parts of town for a gentle rollerblade are the esplanade along La Barceloneta beach and around Port Olímpic.

Sailing & Windsurfing

Head to **Base Nautica Municipal** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 221 04 32; www.basenautica.org; Avinguda Litoral s/n), just back from Platja de la Mar Bella, for courses in pleasure-boat handling, kayaking or windsurfing (€163 for 10 hours' tuition).

Swimming

Down by La Barceloneta, **Club Natació Atlètic-Barcelona** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 221 00 10; www.cnab.org; Plaça de Mar s/n; adult/under 11yr €9.50/5.70; 11 6.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-11pm Sat year-round, 8am-5pm Sun & holidays Oct-mid-May, 8am-8pm Sun & holidays mid-May-Sep) has one indoor and two outdoor pools, a gym and private beach access.

Included in the standard price to Barcelona's Olympic pool, **Piscines Bernat Picornell** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 423 40 41; www.picornell.com in Catalan; Avinguda de l'Estadi 30-40, Montjuïc; adult/15-25yr/senior & child €8.50/5.60/4.50, outdoor pool only Jun-Sep adult/senior & 6-14yr €4.50/3.20; ⌚ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 7am-9pm Sat, 7.30am-4pm Sun, outdoor pool 10am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Oct-May, 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun Jun-Sep), is use of the gym, saunas and spa bath.

Water babies will adore the thalassotherapy sports centre, **Poliesportiu Marítim** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 224 04 40; www.claror.org/maritim.htm in Catalan; Passeig Marítim 33-35; admission Mon-Fri €13.50, Sat, Sun & holidays €16; ⌚ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-9pm Sat, 8am-4pm Sun & holidays). Apart from the smallish training pool, the centre is a minor labyrinth of spa pools that are hot, warm and freezing cold,

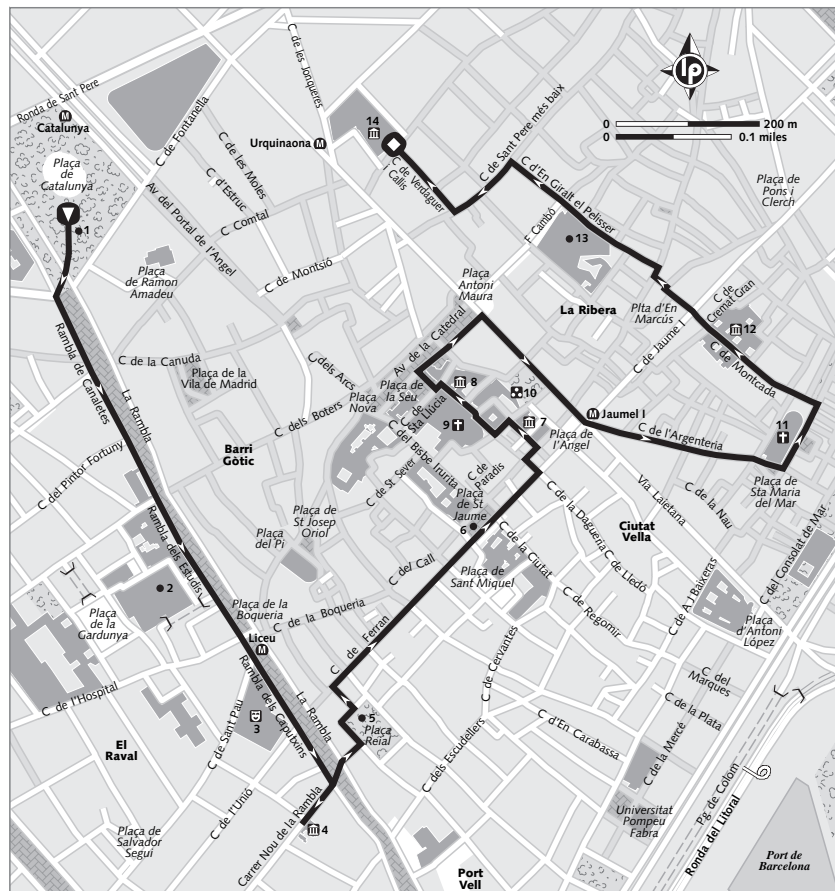
along with waterfalls for massage relief. When you're sufficiently relaxed, you can stumble outside and flop on to the beach.

WALKING TOUR

A great deal of what makes Barcelona fascinating is crowded into a relatively compact space, making an introductory strolling tour a great way to make the city's acquaintance.

WALK FACTS

Start Plaça de Catalunya
Finish Palau de la Música Catalana
Distance 3.5km
Duration 1½ hours



There's nothing wrong with following the crowds to start off with, so wander down La Rambla from Plaça de Catalunya (1). Along the way, sniff around the Mercat de la Boqueria (2; p323), pop into the Gran Teatre del Liceu (3; p284) and visit one of Gaudí's earlier efforts, the Palau Güell (4; p288). From here, cross La Rambla and busy Plaça Reial (5) and make for Plaça de Sant Jaume (6; p285), at the core of the Barri Gòtic and the political heart of the city for 2000 years. You can examine the city's Roman origins in the nearby Museu d'Història de la Ciutat (7; p287). From the complex of buildings huddled around the museum and Plaça del Rei, you pass the Museu Frederic Mares (8; p287) en route for the main façade of the Catedral (9; p286). From there, make the loop down Via Laietana to admire what remains of the Roman walls (10; p287), and then branch off down Carrer de l'Argenteria to reach the splendid Gothic Església de Santa Maria del Mar (11; p290). Circle around it and up noble Carrer de Montcada, home to several museums including the Museu Picasso (12; p289). Proceed north past the Mercat de Santa Caterina (13; p289), a daring 21st-century reincarnation of a grand 19th-century produce market on the site of a medieval monastery, and then dogleg on to the stunning Modernista Palau de la Música Catalana (14; p289).

COURSES

Barcelona is bristling with schools offering Spanish- and Catalan-language courses: **Escola Oficial d'Idiomes de Barcelona** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 324 93 30; www.eoibd.es in Spanish; Avinguda de les Drassanes s/n) Part-time courses (around 10 hours a week) in Spanish and Catalan (around €165 for a semester). Because of the demand for Spanish, there is no guarantee of a place.

International House (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 268 45 11; www.ihes.com/bcn; Carrer de Trafalgar 14) Intensive courses from around €370 for two weeks. Staff can also organise accommodation.

Universitat de Barcelona (Map pp274-5; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 585) Spanish (☎ 93 403 55 19; www.eh.ub.es); Catalan (☎ 93 403 54 77; www.ub.edu/slc) Intensive courses (40 hours' tuition over periods ranging from two weeks to a month; €390) in Spanish year-round. Longer Spanish and Catalan courses are also available.

And you can learn lots more in Barcelona, like salsa and saucers:

Antilla BCN Escuela de Baile (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 451 45 64; www.antillasalsa.com; Carrer d'Aragó 141) The

place to learn salsa and other Caribbean dance. Weekly courses cost €100 per term.

Cook and Taste (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 13 20; www.cookandtaste.net; La Rambla 58; half-day workshop €50) Learn to whip up a paella or stir a gazpacho in this Spanish cookery school.

BARCELONA FOR CHILDREN

There's plenty to interest kids, from street theatre on La Rambla to the beaches. Transport is good, many attractions are huddled fairly close together and children are generally welcome in restaurants and cafés.

An initial stroll along La Rambla is full of potential distractions and wonders, from the bird stands to the living statues and buskers, and the Wax Museum (Museu de Cera, p284) further down the boulevard is bound to keep them engaged.

At the bottom end of La Rambla, more options present themselves: a ride up to the top of the Monument a Colom (p285) or seeing sharks at L'Aquarium (p291). You might also score points with a visit to the nearby 3-D Imax cinema (p326).

The Transbordador Aeri (p291), strung across the harbour between La Barceloneta and Montjuïc, is an irresistible ride. Or scare the willies out of them with a ride in the Hotel Kruger horror house at Tibidabo's Parc d'Ataccions (p296) amusement park!

Of the city's many museums, those most likely to capture children's imagination are the Museu Marítim (p285), the Museu de la Xocolata (p290) and the interactive CosmoCaixa (p296).

In the summer months you will doubtless be rewarded by squeals of delight if you take the bairns to one of the city's swimming pools (p309) and/or the beach (p291). In cooler weather, parks can be a good choice. Montjuïc, including some exploration of its Castell (p309), should appeal to young kids. A wander around

BABYSITTING AGENCIES

Most of the midrange and top-end hotels in Barcelona can organise a babysitting service. A company that many hotels use, and which you can also contact directly, is **5 Serveis** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 56 76, 639 361111; Carrer de Pelai 50). Multilingual babysitters (*canguros*) are available. Reckon on paying about €7.50 an hour plus the cost of the babysitter's taxi ride home.

the maze of the **Jardins del Laberint d'Horta** (p297) will keep kiddies guessing as they try to work their way through the central maze. Animals usually work wonders with truculent toddlers, so why not drop by the **Zoo de Barcelona** (p290)?

QUIRKY BARCELONA

Probably the weirdest museum in town is the **Museu de Carrosses Fúnebres** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 902 076902; Carrer de Sancho d'Àvila 2; admission free; 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, Sun & holidays). This basement hearse museum is the place to come if you want to see how the great and good have been transported to their final resting places in Barcelona since the 18th century.

TOURS

Several tour options present themselves if you want a hand getting around the sights:

Barcelona Walking Tours (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 285 38 34; Plaça de Catalunya 17-S) The Oficina d'Informació de Turisme de Barcelona organises guided walking tours. One explores the Barri Gòtic (adult/child €9/3; English 10am daily, Spanish and Catalan noon Saturday); another follows in Picasso's footsteps and winds up at the Museu Picasso, entry to which is included in the price (€11/5; English 10.30am Tuesday to Sunday, Spanish and Catalan 11.30am Saturday); and a third takes in the main jewels of Modernisme (adult/child €9/3; English 4pm Friday and Saturday, Spanish 4pm Saturday, all tours at 6pm June-September). Finally, there's also a 'gourmet' tour (€11/5), which leads to traditional purveyors of fine foodstuffs, from chocolate to sausages, across the old city (English 11am Friday and Saturday, Spanish and Catalan 11am Saturday). It includes a couple of chances to taste some of the products. All tours last 1½ to two hours and start at the tourist office.

BCN Skytour (☎ 93 224 07 10; www.cathelicopters.com; Heliport, Passeig de l'Escullera; €80; 10am-7pm daily) A 10-minute thrill at 800m above the city in a helicopter will give a real bird's-eye view of the city. You can take the golondrina tour boats (p291) to the Heliport.

Bus Turistic (Map pp274-5; ☎ 010; www.tmb.net; 1 day adult/child €18/11, 2 consecutive days €22/14; 10am-7.45pm) This hop-on hop-off service covers three circuits (44 stops) linking virtually all the major tourist sights. Tourist offices, TMB transport authority offices and many hotels have leaflets explaining the system. Each of the two main circuits takes about two hours. The third circuit, from Port Olímpic to the Forum, runs from April to September and is less interesting. The service doesn't run on Christmas or New Year's days.

Catalunya Bus Turistic (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 285 38 34; www.tmb.net) Two day-tour routes leaving from Plaça de Catalunya (Tuesday to Sunday, April to October) for: Montserrat, Sitges and a visit to the Torres wine cellars

near Pacs del Penedès (€60, 9am to 8.30pm); Girona and Figueres (€60, 8.30am to 8.30pm).

My Favourite Things (☎ 637 265405, 678 542753; www.myft.net; tours €26-32) These people offer tours (with no more than 10 participants) based on numerous themes: anything from design to food, from roller-blading to sailing. Some of the more unusual activities cost more and times vary.

Saboroso.com (☎ 667 770492, 647 390134; www.saboroso.com; Carrer del Comte d'Urgell 45) Gastronomes can wander around the old town on a guided eating tour. You will visit various intriguing food stores, munch on tapas and so on. The cost depends on the content of the walking tour, which can last up to four hours (not all walking!). Expect to pay €80 to €150 a head including food.

Un Cotxe Menys (☎ 93 268 21 05; www.bicicletabarcelona.com; Carrer de l'Esparteria 3; tours €22; 10am-2pm Mon-Fri) This group organises three-hour bike tours around the old city, La Barceloneta, La Sagrada Família and Port Olímpic. There is no need to book unless you have a group of 15 or more. Tours take place at 11am daily throughout the year and at 4.30pm Friday to Monday from April to mid-September. The price includes a drink stop. Turn up to the meeting spot outside the tourist office on Plaça de Sant Jaume.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

April

Dia de Sant Jordi (23 April) This is the day of Catalonia's patron saint (George) and also the Day of the Book: men give women a rose, women give men a book, publishers launch new titles; La Rambla and Plaça de Sant Jaume are filled with book and flower stalls.

June

Dia de Sant Joan (24 June) This is a colourful midsummer celebration with bonfires, even in the squares of L'Eixample, and fireworks marking the evening preceding this holiday.

Dia per l'Alliberament Lesbà i Gai (Saturday nearest 28 June) The city's big gay and lesbian festival and parade.

June–August

Grec Arts Festival (late June to August) The Grec Arts Festival involves music, dance and theatre at many locations across the city.

August

Festa Major de Gràcia (around 15 August) A madcap local festival held in Gràcia, with decorated streets, dancing and concerts.

September

La Diada (11 September) Catalonia's national day, marking the fall of Barcelona in 1714, is a fairly solemn holiday in Barcelona.

GAY & LESBIAN BARCELONA

The city's tourist board publishes *Barcelona – The Official Gay and Lesbian Tourist Guide* bi-annually. A couple of informative free magazines are in circulation in gay bookshops and bars. One is the biweekly *Shan-guide*. It is jammed with listings and contact ads and aimed principally at readers in Barcelona and Madrid. The monthly *Mensual* (€2) is available at newsstands. There is an online version at www.mensual.com (in Spanish). For a listing of gay and lesbian websites, see p849.

Barcelona has a fairly busy gay scene, much of it concentrated in the 'Gaixample', between Carrer de Muntaner and Carrer de Balmes, around Carrer del Consell de Cent.

Arena (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 487 83 42; Carrer de Balmes 32; admission €5-10; 10am-Tue-Sun) Popular with a young, cruisy gay crowd, Arena is one of the top clubs in town for boys seeking boys. Find 'em in the dark room, and keep an eye on Wednesday's drag shows.

Bacon Bear (Map pp274-5; Carrer de Casanova 64; 10pm-2.30am) Every bear needs a cave, and this is a friendly one. It's really just a big bar for burly gay folk. Thursday night from 7pm to 10pm is happy hour(s).

Dietrich Gay Teatros Café (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 451 77 07; Carrer del Consell de Cent 255) It's show time at 1am, with at least one drag-queen gala a night at this cabaret-style locale dedicated to Marlene.

Metro (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 323 52 27; www.metrodiscobcn.com; Carrer de Sepúlveda 185; 10pm-midnight-5am) Metro attracts a casual gay crowd with its two dance floors, three bars and very dark room.

New Chaps (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 215 53 65; Avinguda Diagonal 395; 10pm-3am) Leather lovers get in some close-quarters inspection on the dance floor and more especially in the dark room.

Salvation (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 318 06 86; Ronda de Sant Pere 19-21; 10pm-midnight-5am Fri-Sun) Beautiful boys and fluttering fag hags crowd into this club, where the sexy-boy barmen will warm the hearts of some and the occasional naughty shows will do the rest.

Festes de la Mercè (around 24 September) The city's biggest party involves around four days of concerts, dancing, *castellers* (human castle-builders), a fireworks display synchronised with the Montjuïc fountains, dances of giants on the Saturday, and *correfocs* – a parade of firework-spitting dragons and devils from all over Catalonia, on the Sunday.

SLEEPING

There is no shortage of hotels (with new ones opening seemingly every five minutes) in Barcelona, but its continuing status as one of Europe's city-break getaway flavours-of-the-month and its busy trade fair calendar means that it is often a good idea to book in advance.

Those looking for cheaper accommodation close to the action should check out the Barri Gòtic and El Raval. Some good lower-end *pensiones* (small private hotels) are also scattered about L'Eixample. A growing range of boutique-style hotels with real charm in all categories has enriched the offerings in the past few years. A broad range of midrange and top-end places are spread across L'Eixample, most of them in easy striking distance of the old town, and there are some stunning waterfront options, although these are surprisingly rare.

Camping

The nearest camping grounds to Barcelona lie some way out of town. A couple are on the main coast road heading for Sitges.

Camping Masnou (☎ 93 555 15 03; Camí Fabra 33, El Masnou; 2-person sites with car €28.65; 1 year-round; p s) This is 11km northeast of the city, and only 200m from El Masnou train station (reached by *rodalies* trains from Catalunya station on Plaça de Catalunya). It offers some shade, is near the beach and is reasonable value.

Camping Tres Estrelles (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 633 06 37; Carretera C31, Km186.2, Viladecans; 2-person sites with car €33.70; 10am-mid-Mar-mid-Oct; p s i) This beachside camping ground is one of several located on a stretch starting about 12km southwest of Barcelona. It has shops, restaurants, bars, several pools and laundry facilities. There's a play area for kids and a basketball court. It's a comparatively green spot under shady pines. Bus L95 runs from the corner of Ronda de la Universitat and Rambla de Catalunya.

La Rambla MIDRANGE

Hotel Continental (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 25 70; www.hotelcontinental.com; La Rambla 138; s/d €75/95; a i) Rooms in this classic old Barcelona hotel

(where George Orwell stayed during the civil war) are spare but have romantic touches such as ceiling fans. Try for a double with balcony over La Rambla (for which you pay €10 extra). You can have breakfast in your room.

Hotel Oriente (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 25 58; www.husa.es; La Rambla 45; d €179.75; a) One of Barcelona's oldest hotels is built into the shell of a former convent, among whose most spectacular leftovers is the cloister that is now a skylit restaurant. Rooms are simple but pleasant with parquet floors.

Barri Gòtic

BUDGET

Alberg Hostel Itaca (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 97 51; www.itacahostel.com; Carrer de Ripoll 21; dm €17, d €48-60; i) This bright, quiet hostel option near the cathedral has spacious dorms (for six, eight and 12 people). If you want more privacy, a couple of doubles are also available. Breakfast costs €2, and you can make use of the upstairs kitchen.

Hostal Campi (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 35 45; hcampi@terra.es; Carrer de la Canuda 4; s/d without bathroom €25/46, d with bathroom €56) An excellent bottom-end deal. The best rooms are the doubles with their own loo and shower. Although basic, they are extremely roomy and bright.

Hostal Levante (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 95 65; www.hostallevante.com; Baixada de Sant Miquel 2; s/d without bathroom €33/56, d with bathroom €65; √) Rooms here come in all shapes and sizes. Most have old-style tile floors and many look on to the surrounding streets. Try for a double with a balcony.

MIDRANGE

Hotel California (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 77 66; www.hotelcaliforniabcn.com; Carrer d'En Rauric 14; s/d €65/95; a) A classic, central, gay-friendly establishment, the California offers simple but spotlessly kept rooms in light, neutral colours, with good-sized beds and a bustling breakfast room. Room service operates 24 hours.

Hotel Jordi (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 59 00; www.hoteljordi-barcelona.com; Plaça de Sant Josep Oriol 1; s/d €70/96; a) The best rooms in this attractively located spot are the doubles with a balcony over one of the prettiest squares in the city. The rest are fairly average.

TOP END

Hotel Neri (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 304 06 55; www.hotelneri.com; Carrer de Sant Sever 5; d from €248.25; a i √) Occupying a beautifully adapted, centuries-old building, this stunningly renovated medieval

mansion combines historic stone walls with sexy plasma TVs. Downstairs is a fine restaurant and you can take a drink and catch some rays on the roof deck.

El Raval

BUDGET

Alberg Center Rambles (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 40 69; www.tujuca.com; Carrer de l'Hospital 63; dm with breakfast up to €22.25; h 24hr; a i) This HI hostel is right in the thick of things, just off La Rambla. Beds are in single-sex dorms of four to 10 people. Safes and laundry facilities are available, and there are discounts for people under 26 and ISIC cardholders.

Hostal Gat Raval (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 481 66 70; www.gataccommodation.com; Carrer de Joaquim Costa 44; s/d without bathroom €38/54, d with bathroom €60; a i) They've opted for a pea-green and lemon-lime colour scheme in this hip young 2nd-floor *hostal*, deep in El Raval. Rooms are pleasant, secure and each behind a green door, but only some have private bathroom. Across the road you have a choice of busy bars to while away the evenings.

Hotel Peninsular (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 31 38; www.hpeninsular.com; Carrer de Sant Pau 34; s/d without bathroom €30/50, with bathroom €50/70; a) The star attraction of this one-time convent is the plant-draped atrium extending the full height of the hotel, at the bottom of which you take breakfast in the morning. Rooms are simple, clean and (mostly) spacious.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Aneto (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 99 89; www.hotelaneto.com; Carrer del Carme 38; s/d €50/70; a) This good midrange hotel, at the lower end of the scale, is nestled in a lively street, in one of the nicer parts of El Raval. The best rooms are the doubles with the shuttered street-side balconies.

Hostal Gat Xino (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 324 88 33; www.gataccommodation.com; Carrer de l'Hospital 149-155; s/d €60/80; a i) Better still than Gat Raval (above) is this newer version. The lime-green decor theme continues but rooms are more spacious and all have bathroom. There is even a suite with its own terrace (€120), with views to Montjuïc.

Hotel España (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 318 17 58; www.hotelespanya.com; Carrer de Sant Pau 9-11; s/d €80.25/112.35; a) The hotel is famous for its two marvellous dining rooms, designed by the Modernista architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner. One

has big sea-life murals by Ramon Casas; the other has floral tiling and a wood-beamed roof. The rooms are a little on the dingy side but have high ceilings and certainly exude the flavour of a past era.

Abba Rambla Hotel (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 505 54 00; www.abbaramblahotel.com; Rambla del Raval 4; s/d €96.30/112.35; a i p) Overlooking the human theatre of El Raval's grand pedestrian strip, the modern Abba Rambla Hotel offers sunny rooms with functional furniture and dark parquet floors.

Hotel Mesón de Castilla (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 318 21 82; www.husa.es; Carrer de Valldonzella 5; d €139.10; p a) Some characterful Modernista touches remain on the 1st floor of this elegant hotel. Heavy wooden furniture, across several timeless sitting rooms, contrasts with playful stained glass and murals, and Gaudiesque window mouldings. Rooms have a classic charm and lone travellers may get a modest cut off the price of a double. The best doubles are those with terraces out the back.

Hotel San Agustín (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 318 16 58; www.hotelsa.com; Plaça de Sant Agustí 3; s/d €112.35/149.80; a i √) This one-time 18th-century monastery opened as a hotel in 1840, making it the city's oldest (it's undergone various refits since then!). The location is perfect: a quick stroll off La Rambla, on a curious square. Consider an attic double, with a sloping ceiling and bird's-eye views.

TOP END

Casa Camper (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 342 62 80; www.camper.es; Carrer d'Elisabets 11; s/d €230.05/251.45; a i n) These designer digs, run by the Mallorcan shoe people in the better end of El Raval, offer rooms with a few surprises, like the Vinçon furniture. Across the corridor from each room itself is a separate, private sitting room, with balcony, TV and hammock.

La Ribera

BUDGET

Pensió 2000 (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 310 74 66; www.pensio2000.com; Carrer de Sant Pere més Alt 6; s/d without bathroom €40.70/51.40, with bathroom €51.40/72.80; i) Sitting in front of the Modernista chocolate box that is the Palau de la Música Catalana (p289), this cheerful *pensió* (small, private hotel), with its seven canary-yellow rooms, is a conveniently placed option. The best rooms have their own bathroom. You can also take time out on the little terrace.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Banys Orientals (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 84 60; www.hotelbanysorientals.com; Carrer de l'Argenteria 37; s/d €85.60/101.65; a i) Cool blues and aquamarines combine with dark-hued parquet floors to lend this boutique beauty an understated charm. All rooms – admittedly on the small side, but impeccably presented – look onto the street or back lanes. Next door they have some bigger (duplex) and somewhat more expensive suites (€133.75). It remains one of the best deals in town.

MIDRANGE

Park Hotel (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 60 00; www.parkhotelbarcelona.com; Avinguda del Marqués de l'Argentera 11; s/d €128.40/165.85; p a √) This 1950s hotel, which oozes details of that period such as the angular spiral stairway, is a minor Barcelona landmark. Dark wood and fabrics dominate the rooms, some of which have terraces. The chic Abac restaurant downstairs (see p320) is also the hotel breakfast room.

Port Vell & the Coast

BUDGET

Hostel Sea Point (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 224 70 75; www.seapointhostel.com; Plaça del Mar 4; dm €23; i) What this youth hostel lacks in charm it makes up for in position. Set in an ugly high-rise and with rather tight dorms, it is right on the beach. The only other options in Barcelona that can make such a boast are five-star.

MIDRANGE

Hotel del Mar (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 33 02; www.gargallohotels.es; Plaça de Palau 19; s/d €120/152; a i) Recently converted into a comfortable mid-level spot, the 'Sea Hotel' is neatly placed between Port Vell and El Born. Some of the rooms in this classified building have balconies with waterfront views. It's no more than 10 minutes' walk from the beaches and seafood of La Barceloneta and the bars of El Born.

TOP END

Hotel Arts Barcelona (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 221 10 00; www.ritzcarlton.com; Carrer de la Marina 19-21; r €380-460; p a i s √) In one of the two sky-high towers that dominate Port Olímpic, these are Barcelona's most fashionable digs, frequented by VIPs from all over the planet. The rooms

have unbeatable views. Prices vary greatly according to the size and position of the rooms. You can indulge in all sorts of extras, from massages to your own private bath butler.

L'Eixample

BUDGET

Centric Point (Map pp272-3; % 93 231 20 45; www.centricpointhostel.com; Passeig de Gràcia 33; dm €19, d €45; j) This is your chance to stay on Barcelona's snootiest boulevard without paying commensurate rent! One of four hostels run by the same people, this one offers 400 beds in a Modernista building close to Plaça de Catalunya. Linen is supplied and there is a bar on the premises.

Hostal Neutral (Map pp272-3; % 93 487 63 90; hostalneutral@arrakis.es; La Rambla de Catalunya 42; s/d without bathroom €30/50) A reliable old-style option in a privileged and leafy location, this is a no-frills pit stop in a chichi part of town. It has a couple of microscopic singles without bathrooms but they are generally occupied. The doubles without a loo do have a shower.

Hostal Central (Map pp274-5; % 93 302 24 20; info@hostalcentral.com; Ronda de l'Universitat 11; s/d with bathroom €33/45, with bathroom €52/65) Spread out over several renovated flats, some of the larger rooms have charming terraces looking onto the admittedly noisy street. Lovingly restored mosaic or prim new parquet floors are a nice touch.

MIDRANGE

Hostal Windsor (Map pp272-3; % 93 215 11 98; Rambla de Catalunya 84; s/d €48.15/72.75) An immaculately maintained, elegant old *hostal*, the Windsor offers a good deal. The rooms facing the street are the brightest. Cheaper rooms without a bathroom are also available.

Hostal Goya (Map pp272-3; % 93 302 25 65; www.hostalgoya.com; Carrer de Pau Claris 74; s/d without bathroom €37.45/67, d with bathroom €75.45-88.30; a) Near Plaça de Catalunya, this place offers the option of tastefully renovated rooms (with stylish parquet floors and a pleasing, light colour scheme) or the somewhat tattier ones that may one day also be overhauled.

Hotel d'Uxelles (Map pp272-3; % 93 265 25 60; www.hotelduxelles.com; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 688; s/d €80.25/99.50; a j) Wrought-iron bedsteads are overshadowed by flowing drapes in rooms that each have their own personal décor (from blues and whites to beige-and-cream combos). Some have little terraces. Get a back room as Gran Via is incredibly noisy.

Hostal Palacios (Map pp272-3; % 93 301 37 92; www.hostalpalacios.com; Rambla de Catalunya 27; s €55-65, d €100, ste €150; a i) This classy *hostal* offers fine, sunny rooms with high ceilings and old-style furnishings. The 'suites', which can be taken as triples, are roomy and worth the extra outlay.

Hotel Constanza (Map pp272-3; % 93 270 19 10; www.hotelconstanza.com; Carrer de Bruc 33; s/d €107/128.40; j a) This boutique belle has stolen the heart of many a visitor to Barcelona. Even smaller singles are made to feel special with broad mirrors and strong colours (reds and yellows, with black furniture). Design touches abound, and little details like flowers in the bathroom add charm.

Hotel Cram (Map pp274-5; % 93 216 77 00; www.hotelcram.com; Carrer d'Aribau 54; s/d €145.50/163; s a i p) A magnificent 1892 façade hides a designer's dream, with beguiling, if somewhat smallish, rooms. A light, white and timber toned décor dominates. You'll love the high-pressure showers. Hang out on the roof terrace or dine downstairs in one the city's most exclusive restaurants, Gaig.

Hotel Catalonia Berna (Map pp272-3; % 93 272 00 50; www.hoteles-catalonia.com; Carrer de Roger de Llúria 60; d €184; s a i p) It is difficult to miss the intriguing, restored frescoes that grace the entire frontage of this historic corner building, which was one of the first to go up in L'Eixample in the 1860s. The rooms are less surprising but perfectly comfortable and with marble bathrooms.

Hotel Diagonal (Map pp268-9; % 93 489 53 00; www.hoteldiagonalbarcelona.com; Avinguda Diagonal 205; s/d €123.05/192.60; s i a p) Designed by local architect Juli Capella as an angular reply to its tubular neighbour, the Torre Agbar, the striking black-and-white exterior presages the designer interior, with purple lighted corridors leading to bright, light rooms, some with stunning views of the tower next door. **Hotel Axel** (Map pp274-5; % 93 323 93 93; www.hotelaxel.com; Carrer d'Aribau 33; s/d €133.75/197.95; a i s) Fashion-and gay-friendly, the sleek-lined, corner-block Axel offers modern touches in its designer rooms. Plasma-screen TVs and (in the double rooms) king-size beds are just some of the pluses. Take a break in the rooftop pool, the Finnish sauna or the Jacuzzi. Or sip a cocktail at the summer skybar.

Hotel Àmister (Map pp268-9; % 93 363 34 68; www.hotelamister.com; Avinguda de Roma 93-95; d €101.50-225; a i) On a corner block of a busy boulevard, this artsy (check the art out in the common

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Omm (Map pp272-3; % 93 445 40 00; www.hotelomm.es; Carrer del Rosselló 265; d €224.70-449.40; a s w) The balconies look like strips of metallic skin peeled back from the shiny surface of the hotel – the sort of idea a latter-day Modernista might have had! Light, clear tones dominate in the ultra-modern rooms, and the sprawling foyer bar has become a popular evening meeting point for guests and outsiders alike. Behind the beautiful-people bar is a one-Michelin-star restaurant (meals €100-150). Hell, this place even has its own club downstairs.

areas and some rooms) digs offers light-filled rooms and frills including (depending on the offer you get) free daily paper. Prices vary wildly depending on season and other factors. A handful of more costly rooms are more like compact apartments.

Hotel Prestige (Map pp272-3; % 93 272 41 80, 902 200414; www.prestigepaseodegracia.com; Passeig de Gràcia 62; d €173.35-229; a i p w) You're in a 21st-century designer hotel (encased in a well-preserved 1930s edifice), with Bang & Olufsen TVs and soft back-lighting above the beds. Inside the block is a pretty garden and among the hotel's amenities is Zeroom, a library and music room to chill in.

Hotel Hispanos Siete Suiza (Map pp272-3; % 93 208 20 51; www.barcelona19apartments.com; Carrer de Sicília 255; apt €192.60-256.80; p a i) Near La Sagrada Família, this hotel's apartments have two double rooms and separate bathrooms, a lounge, a fully equipped kitchen and a terrace. The only drawback is that it's a minor hike from the heart of the action.

TOP END

Hotel Claris (Map pp272-3; % 93 487 62 62; www.derbyhotels.es; Carrer de Pau Claris 150; d from €310; p a s w) Inside the fine 19th-century Palacio Verdura lurks one of the city's best-known designer digs (with a permanent art collection on show). Décor varies greatly: some rooms are strikingly modern, while others cede to more classic tastes in luxury.

Gràcia

Hotel Casa Fuster (Map pp272-3; % 93 255 30 00; www.hotelescenter.es; Passeig de Gràcia 132; d from €412;

a s i p w) It is hard to believe the wrecking ball once threatened this Modernista mansion turned luxury hotel. Standard rooms are plush if smallish. Period features have been lovingly restored and complemented with hydro-massage tubs, plasma TVs and king-sized beds.

Tibidabo & Around

BUDGET

Alberg Mare de Déu de Montserrat (Map pp268-9; % 93 210 51 51; www.tujuca.com; Passeig de la Mare de Déu del Coll 41-51; dm up to €22.25) Four kilometres north of the city, this hostel's main building is a magnificent former mansion with a Mudéjar-style lobby. Most rooms sleep six. Sitting outside on balmy summer nights makes a pleasant alternative to a trip into town. There are discounts for people under 26 and ISIC cardholders. Take the metro to Vallcarca station and then bus 28 or 92.

Apartments

An alternative accommodation option can be short-term apartment rental. Typical prices are around €80 to €100 for two people per night. If you're looking to do a short-term house swap, check out the ads on www.loquo.com. There are scores of rental services:

Apartment Barcelona (Map pp272-3; % 93 215 79 34; www.apartmentbarcelona.com; Carrer de València 286)
Barcelona Apartments (Map pp268-9; % 93 414 55 28; www.barcelonaapartments.com; Via Augusta 173)
Barcelona On Line (Map pp272-3; % 93 343 79 93/94; www.barcelona-on-line.es; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 662)

Long-Term Rentals

The **Universitat de Barcelona** (Map pp274-5; % 93 402 11 00; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 585), the **British Council** (Map pp268-9; % 93 241 99 77; Carrer d'Amigo 83) and **International House** (Map pp274-5; % 93 268 45 11; Carrer de Trafalgar 14) have noticeboards with ads for flat shares.

Another option for students coming to Barcelona to study is **Rent a Bedroom** (Map pp272-3; % 93 217 88 12; www.rentabedroom.com; Avinguda del Príncep d'Astúries 52). Staff can organise rooms in share houses for between €300 and €700, inclusive of bills.

The free English-language monthly *Barcelona Metropolitan*, found in bars, some hotels, and occasionally at tourist offices, carries rental classifieds in English, as does another monthly freebie, *Catalunya Classified*.

Check out the ads at www.loquo.com too. Otherwise, get hold of *Anuntis*, the weekly classifieds paper. The last few pages of the *Suplement Immobiliària* (Real-Estate Supplement) carry ads for shared accommodation under the heading *lloguer/hostes i vivendes a compartir*. Count on rent of €300 a month or more. To this, you need to add your share of bills (gas, electricity, water, phone and *comunidad* – building maintenance).

EATING

Barcelona was always a good place to eat but in recent years it has evolved into something of a foodies' paradise on earth, combining rich Catalan cooking traditions with a new wave of cutting-edge chefs at the vanguard of what has been dubbed *nueva cocina española*. The city has taken on quite a cosmopolitan hue too. Whereas Thai, Japanese and other exotic cuisines were barely represented in the mid-1990s, they are now springing up all over the city.

The main concentration of new and experimental cuisine is in El Born, the trendy, BoHo lower side of La Ribera in the old city. More traditional restaurants, often not too demanding fiscally speaking, are scattered across the Barri Gòtic, and there are some gems in El Raval too.

Gràcia is also full of tempting little eateries, among them a legion of Middle Eastern and Greek joints.

Across the broad expanse of L'Eixample and the Zona Alta, and further outlying

districts, you'll find all sorts. The majority of the seriously top-level joints are to be found secreted away in such areas. You need to know where you are going, however, as wandering about aimlessly and picking whatever takes your fancy is not as feasible as in the old city.

Cartas (menus) may be in Catalan, Spanish or both; some establishments also have foreign-language menus.

Barri Gòtic

BUDGET

Can Conesa (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 310 57 95; Carrer de la Llibreteria 1; bocadillos & toasted sandwiches €2.50-4.50; 1 Mon-Sat) They have been doling out delicious *bocadillos* (bread rolls with filling), frankfurters and toasted sandwiches here for more than 50 years – *barcelonins* swear by it and queue for it.

Maoz (Map pp278-9; Carrer de Ferran 13; falafels €2.90-4; 1 noon-2am; ✓) There's a lot of goodness packed into a tiny space here. The extent to which you stuff yourself depends on just how much of the fillings you can cram into your pita.

Bagel Shop (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 41 61; Carrer de la Canuda 25; meals €8-10; 1 9.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun; 1) Searching for a smoked salmon and cream cheese bagel? You've found the spot for this and a whole array of savoury and sweet bagels using different types of bread.

Bodega La Palma (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 315 06 56; Carrer de la Palma de Sant Just 7; meals €10-15; 1 lunch &

dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat) Time stopped still in this ageless tavern where platters of cheese and cured ham rule the roost, washed down with throaty house red tapped directly from the enormous barrels that line the wall.

MIDRANGE

Bar Celta (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 315 00 06; Carrer de la Mercè 16; meals €20; 1 noon-midnight) Specialists in *pulpo* (octopus) and other seaside delights from Galicia in the country's northwest, the waiters waste no time in serving up bottles of crisp white Ribeiro wine to wash down the *raciones* (large tapas serving).

Agut (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 315 17 09; Carrer d'en Gignàs 16; meals €25-30; 1 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; 1) Contemporary paintings set a contrast with the fine traditional Catalan dishes offered in this timeless restaurant. Start with a platter of cured ham, and proceed with a menu of meat or fish – *suquet de rap* (monkfish stew, €18.30) is succulent.

Restaurant Pitarra (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 16 47; Carrer d'Avinyó 56; meals €30; 1 Mon-Sat Sep-Jul; 1) So many local politicians can't be wrong. Judging by the photos on the wall, the entire Catalan parliament has passed through here for hearty Catalan fare, whether seafood or pigs' trotters.

Pla (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 65 52; Carrer de Bellafila 5; meals €35; 1 dinner; 1) In this modern den of inventive cooking, and music worthy of a club, the chefs present deliciously strange combinations such as *bacallà amb salsa de pomes verdes* (cod in a green apple sauce). Exotic meats like kangaroo turn up on the menu too, and it's a good idea to let yourself be guided by the waiters.

Els Quatre Gats (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 41 40; Carrer de Montsió 3 bis; meals €30-40; 1 1pm-1am; 1) Once a turn-of-the-20th-century hangout for the city's avant-garde artists (see opposite), Els Quatre Gats is full of charming tile and timberwork. It also displays reproductions of some of its former customers' portraits, painted by other former customers. Head out past the bar to the rear dining area, gathered around a courtyard.

El Raval

BUDGET

Buenas Migas (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 16 86; Plaça del Bonsuccés 6; meals €10-15) This charming hole-in-the-wall (part of a growing chain), in a busy little square just off La Rambla, offers decent

focaccia, pizza slices and other snacks that quickly constitute a full meal.

Organic (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 301 09 02; Carrer de la Junta de Comerç 11; lunch €8-12, dinner €20-25; 1 1pm-midnight; 1 ✓) A long sprawl of a vegetarian diner, Organic is always full. Choose from a limited range of options that change from day to day, and tuck into the all-you-can-eat salad bar in the middle of the restaurant. At night prices go up a tad and a full waiting service operates.

Mesón David (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 441 59 34; Carrer de les Carretes 63; meals €15; 1 Thu-Tue) With its timber ceiling and chaotic feel, this is a great slice of old Spain. Plonk yourself down on a bench for gregarious dining. It's no-nonsense cooking here, and house specialities include *Jec-hazo asado*, a great clump of roast suckling lamb (€6).

Bar Pinotxo (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 17 31; Mercat de la Boqueria; meals €15; 1 6am-5pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jul) Of the half-dozen or so tapas bars and informal eateries scattered about the market, this one near the Rambla entrance is the best known and most popular.

MIDRANGE

Restaurant El Cafetí (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 329 24 19; Pas-satge de Bernardí; meals €25-30; 1 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; 1) This diminutive eatery is filled with antique furniture and offers traditional local cooking, with one or two unorthodox variations. Paella and other rice dishes dominate. It is down an arcade just off Carrer de Sant Rafael.

Biblioteca (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 62 21; Carrer de la Junta de Comerç 28, meals €35; 1 Tue-Sat) Exposed-brick and creamy-white décor dominate in the 'Library', where the food represents a broad sweep across Spain, with careful creative touches and a good wine list. A good sample is *bacallà confitat amb suc d'escarrelans i llegums de temporada* (pickled salted cod with crayfish juice and seasonal vegetables).

Ca l'Isidre (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 441 11 39; Carrer de les Flors 12; meals €45; 1 Mon-Sat) Ca l'Isidre is one of those old-world restaurants where immaculately kept dining areas are dominated by warm timber and tiles. Chefs use only the best of ingredients gathered in the morning at La Boqueria market to produce quality local cuisine, and white-jacketed waiters deliver the goods with silken alacrity to your table.

AN ARTISTS' LAIR

When up and coming Modernista architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch finished his first building in the heart of the Barri Gòtic in the 1890s, a rather self-possessed group of local artists thought it would make the perfect spot for a permanent meeting place.

Barcelona dandy Ramon Casas and his pal Santiago Rusiñol, the city's two leading artists of the day and joint heads of the Modernisme movement in painting, teamed up with good friends Miquel Utrillo and Pere Romeu to open a new tavern here in 1897. They called it Els Quatre Gats (The Four Cats) in allusion to its four founders and to Le Chat Noir, an artistic café in Montmartre, Paris. Idiomatically, it means 'a handful of people, a minority', which is no doubt how they and their trendy clientele saw themselves.

Romeu, the manager, was a colourful character equally devoted to cabaret and cycling, and under his stewardship the place quickly became a meeting, drinking and cavorting place of young artists, writers, actors, musicians and their circles.

The group published its own magazine and staged exhibitions, recitals and even shadow-puppet shows. Picasso's first exhibition was held here in 1900, and included drawings of many of the customers. The fun came to an end all too soon. Els Quatre Gats closed in 1903. Later it was used as an art gallery, before its present incarnation as a restaurant (see review, opposite).

TOP END

Casa Leopoldo (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 441 30 14; Carrer de Sant Rafael 24; meals €50; lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎) Several rambling dining areas with magnificent tiled walls and exposed timber-beam ceilings, make this a fine option. The seafood menu is extensive and the local wine list strong. This is an old-town classic beloved of writers and artists down the decades.

La Ribera

BUDGET

Casa Delfin (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 50 88; Passeig del Born 36; menú €8.50; ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Sat) Under siege from triremes of ultra avant-garde cookeries, the 'Dolphin House' continues to do what it has always done best – a bountiful lunch from an extensive menu of Spanish favourites. No frills, just good tucker amid all the fancy folk.

El Xampanyet (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 70 03; Carrer de Montcada 22; meals €15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Nothing much has changed in this, one of the city's best-known *cava* bars. Plant yourself at the bar or seek out a table jammed up against the old-style tiled walls for a glass or three of *cava* and an assortment of tapas, such as the tangy *boquerons en vinagre* (white anchovies in vinegar).

MIDRANGE

Habana Vieja (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 25 04; Carrer dels Banys Vells 2; meals €20; ☎ Mon-Sat) This Cuban hideaway offers island faves like stringy meat – *ropa vieja* ('old clothes', €13) and rice dishes. With its antique light fittings and predilection for rickety timber furnishings, this old Ribera house could easily be an Old Habana eatery.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hofmann (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 58 89; Carrer de l'Argenteria 74; meals €50-60; ☎ Mon-Fri; ☎) Discreetly tucked away, upstairs in the plant-filled annexe to one of the city's renowned cuisine schools, is this refined restaurant. Some of the nation's great chefs learned the trade here, and you will not be disappointed with the present students' efforts. An imaginative and constantly changing menu keeps chefs and diners on their toes. Special care is put into the desserts, and there's a lunch *menú del dia* for around €30.

La Flauta Mágica (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 46 94; Carrer dels Banys Vells 18; meals €20-25; ☎ dinner; ☎ ✓) You feel instantly cheerful on entering this salon, which caters to vegetarians and carnivores alike. How about *rice 'n' curry del país de la eternal sonrisa* (from the land of the eternal smile)? The 'magic flute' itself is an ingenious cheese and carrot roll.

Pla de la Garsa (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 315 23 13; Carrer dels Assaonadors 13; meals €25; ☎ dinner; ☎) This 17th-century house is ideal for a romantic dinner. Timber beams, a peppering of tables around the dining area and soft ambient music combine to make an enchanting setting for traditional Catalan cooking. The *tast selecte* (€23.90), a tasting menu, is a good way to get a broad idea of what they cook up here.

Santa Maria (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 315 12 27; Carrer de Comerç 17; meals €30-40; ☎ Tue-Sat) It comes as no surprise that this irreverent little gastrodome should be located snugly amid other avant-garde El Born kitchens. Here your bar snack is as likely to be a serving of Sichuan pepper yucca chips or spicy mussels with fried plantain.

Centre Cultural Euskal Etxea (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 310 21 85; Plaça de Montcada 1; tapas €15-20, meals €30; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Barcelona has plenty of Basque and pseudo-Basque eateries, but this is the real deal. It captures the feel of San Sebastián better than many of its newer competitors. Choose your *pintxos* (snacks), sip *txacoli* wine, and keep the toothpicks so the staff can count them up and work out your bill.

Comerc 24 (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 319 21 02; Carrer del Comerç 24; meals €35-45; ☎ Tue-Sat; ☎) The edgy black-red-grey décor in the rear dining area lends this culinary cauldron a New York feel. Chef Carles Abellán whips up some eccentric dishes, inspired by everything from sushi to *crostini*. Plump for the tasting menu (€48) and leave it all up to Abellán.

Cal Pep (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 310 79 61; Plaça de les Olles 8; meals €45; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon Sep-Jul; ☎) This gourmet tapas bar is one of the most popular in town and difficult to snaffle a spot in. Pep recommends *cloïsses amb pernil* (clams and ham – seriously! – at €11.70) or the *trifàsic*, a combo of calamari, whitebait and prawns (€11.10).

TOP END

Àbac (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 66 00; Carrer del Rec 79-89; meals €90-100; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon,

closed Easter & Aug) Minimalist designer décor is matched by some of the best designer eating in the city. You never quite know what might emerge from the kitchen, but it does so with a rare aplomb.

La Barceloneta & the Coast

BUDGET

Can Maño (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 319 30 82; Carrer del Baluard 12; meals €15; ☎ Mon-Sat) You'll need to be prepared to wait, before being squeezed in at a packed table for a raucous night of *racions* (posted on a board at the back) over a bottle of *turbio* – a cloudy white plonk. You can breakfast on *gambes* (prawns) too if you want!

El Chiringuito de Moncho's (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 221 14 01; Avinguda Litoral 36; meals €15; ☎ noon-1am; ☎) The Moncho's seafood chain is cheap and cheerful. There are no designer frills in this good-natured, noisy barnyard of a place, where you can feast on fish and seafood by the sea without blowing your budget. The kitchen is fired up all day.

MIDRANGE

Can Ros (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 221 45 79; Carrer de l'Almirall Aixada 7; meals €25-30; ☎ Thu-Tue; ☎) Little has changed over the decades in this seafood fave. In a restaurant where the décor is a reminder of simpler times, a simple rule guides – serve up succulent fresh fish cooked with a light touch.

Agua (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 225 12 72; Passeig Marítim 30; meals €30; ☎) Head for this beachside dining area, gaily decorated with marine motifs, for bright Mediterranean dishes like *arroz con alcachofas, gambas y setas* (rice with artichokes, prawns and mushrooms).

Suquet de l'Almirall (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 221 62 33; Passeig de Joan de Borbó 65; meals €45-50; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; ☎) A family business run by one of the acolytes of Ferran Adrià's El Bulli restaurant (see p356), the order of the day is top-class seafood. A starter of *ventresca de tonyina* (the prized and tastiest tuna meat), followed perhaps by a house speciality such as *arros a la barca* (rice laden with various types of fish, squid and tomato). The restaurant is closed for two weeks in August.

TOP END

Torre d'Alta Mar (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 221 00 07; Torre de Sant Sebastià, Passeig de Joan Borbó 88; meals €70-80;

☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Mon; ☎) Head up to the top of the Torre de Sant Sebastià and take a ringside seat for the best views of the city, and seafood. The setting alone makes this ideal for impressing a date.

L'Exemple

BUDGET

Can Maño (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 454 59 25; Carrer de Muntaner 109; meals €10-12; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat; ☎ ✓) A limited and varying *menú del dia* (€9.10) is offered in this proper little place, and while servings are hardly gargantuan, the grub is tasty. The menu changes regularly but you might encounter a scrumptious *paella d'arros integral amb verdure*s (whole rice vegetable paella).

Amaltea (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 454 86 13; Carrer de la Diputació 164; meals €10-15; ☎ Mon-Sat; ☎ ✓) The weekday set lunch (€9) offers a series of dishes that change frequently with the seasons. Savour an *escalopa de seitan* (seitan escalope) and *empanadillas* (pastry pockets stuffed with spinach or hiziki algae and tofu).

MIDRANGE

La Rita (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 487 23 76; Carrer d'Aragó 279; meals €20; ☎) Locals love to line up to dine here, if only because the price-quality rapport is excellent. So join the queue to get inside this boisterous restaurant. You have a choice between classic local cooking and some more inventive dishes, and there's a great *menú del dia* (€7.90).

El Rincón Maya (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 451 39 46; Carrer de València 183; meals €20; ☎ Tue-Sun) The setting in this Mexican restaurant is warm and crowded. The nachos, guacamole and fajitas burst with flavour, and you may have to queue for a table.

Cerveceria Catalana (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 216 03 68; Carrer de Mallorca 236; meals €20-25; ☎) This 'Catalan brewery' is great for its cornucopia of tapas (€3 to €4.50) and *montaditos* (canapés, €1.50-2.50). You can sit at the bar, outside, or in the restaurant at the back. The variety of hot tapas, mouth-watering salads and other snacks draws a well-dressed crowd.

Relais de Venise (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 467 21 62; Carrer de Pau Claris 142; meals €20; ☎ Sep-Jul; ☎) There's just one dish, a succulent beef entrecôte with a secret 'sauce Porte-Maillot' (named after the location of the original restaurant in Paris), chips and salad. It is served in slices and in two waves so that it doesn't go cold.

Koyuki (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 237 84 90; Carrer de Còrsega 242; meals €20-30; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun) Take a seat at one of the long tables in this basement Japanese eatery that is as popular with Japanese visitors as it is with Catalans in the know. The *tempura udon* (€7.80) is a hearty thick noodle option.

Inopia (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 424 52 31; Carrer de Tamarit 104; meals €25-30; 𠄎 dinner Tue-Fri, lunch & dinner Sat) Albert Adrià, brother of star chef Ferran, has his hands full with this constantly busy, corner, gourmet-tapas temple. Try the lightly fried, tempura-style vegetables, olive selections and *pincho moruno de pollo* (chicken on a skewer).

Chicoa (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 453 11 23; Carrer d'Aribau 73; meals €35; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; 𠄎) For good traditional Catalan cooking, locals keep coming back to Chicoa. A speciality of the house is anything to do with *bacallà* (salted cod).

El Peixerot (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 424 69 69; Av de Tarragona 177; meals €40-50; 𠄎) With its sea-blue décor and long-standing fame for fresh seafood (sold by weight) and rice dishes, this is a quality stop in the rather unlikely train-station area.

Cata 1.81 (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 323 68 18; Carrer de València 181; meals €45-50; 𠄎 dinner Mon-Sat Sep-Jul) Call ahead and see if you can get the back room behind the kitchen. Surrounded by shelves of fine wines (which are a serious element of a meal here) packed to the rafters, you will be treated to a series of dainty gourmet dishes, such as *truita amb tòfona* (a thick potato tortilla with a delicate trace of truffle).

Cinc Sentits (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 323 94 90; Carrer d'Aribau 58; meals €40-50; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun, closed Easter & Aug) Indulge in one of three adventurous tasting menus (from €26 to €50) of small, experimental dishes at 'Five Senses'.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Restaurant de l'Escola de Restauració i Hostalatge (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 453 29 03; Carrer de Muntaner 70-72; meals €30-35; 𠄎 Mon-Fri Sep-Jul; 𠄎) Greenery hangs from the ceiling and contemporary art from the walls. The cooks-in-training bend over backwards to produce a combination of local classics, such as *fricandó de vedella amb moixerons* (veal fricandeau with St George mushrooms), fish of the day and more modern creative dishes.

TOP END

Sauç (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 321 01 89; Passatge de Lluís Pellicer 12; meals €60-70; 𠄎 Tue-Sat; 𠄎) Pop down into this back lane basement place and enter an upcoming gourmet landmark. The décor is sober but the dishes are sins for the senses. The €56 tasting menu comprises an appetiser and five courses, followed by a cheese selection and two desserts, which is a great way to get a broad impression of what happens here!

Gràcia

BUDGET

Sol Soler (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 217 44 40; Plaça del Sol 21-22; meals €15; 𠄎 dinner) This is a pleasant corner of a busy, bar-lined square. Gather around the convivial marble-top tables for a drink and enticing, inventive snacks, which you choose at the bar.

MIDRANGE

Goliard (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 207 31 75; Carrer de Progrés 6; meals €30; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat & Sun; 𠄎) This quiet diner is a haven of exquisite designer cooking at modest prices. Try the *lassanya de pops i patates* (a lasagne in which sliced potatoes take the place of pasta, and slightly spicy, tender octopus is the meat). Book ahead.

Envalira (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 218 58 13; Plaça del Sol 13; meals €25; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) An inconspicuous, old-time eatery, Envalira specialises in fish and rice dishes, from *arròs a la milanesa* (a savoury rice dish with chicken, pork and a light cheese gratin, €10) to *bullit de lluç*, a slice of white hake boiled with herb-laced rice and a handful of clams (€11).

Montjuïc & Poble Sec

MIDRANGE

Quimet i Quimet (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 442 31 42; Carrer del Poeta Cabanyes 25; tapas €2-3; 𠄎 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun; 𠄎) Quimet i Quimet is proof that good things come in small packages. Cram into this bottle-lined quad for gourmet tapas, fine wine and even a specially made dark Belgian beer.

Restaurant Elche (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 441 30 89; Carrer de Vila i Vila 71; meals €25) With tables spreading over two floors, and old-world style in service and settings, this spot has been doing some of Barcelona's best paella (of various types) and *fideuà* (vaguely similar to paella, but made with vermicelli noodles) since the 1960s.

Self-Catering

Shop in the Mercat de la Boqueria (Map pp278-9; La Rambla de Sant Josep; 𠄎 8am-8pm Mon-Sat), one of the world's great produce markets, and complemented with any other necessities from a local supermarket. Handy ones include **Champion** (Map pp278-9; La Rambla dels Estudis 113; 𠄎 9am-10pm Mon-Sat), near the northern end of La Rambla, and **Superservis** (Map pp278-9; Carrer d'Avinyó 13; 𠄎 8am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat), in the heart of Barri Gòtic.

For freshly baked bread, head for a *for* or *panaderia*. For a gourmet touch, the food sections of El Corte Inglés department stores (p329) have some tempting local and imported goodies.

DRINKING

Barcelona's bars run the gamut from wood-panelled wine cellars to bright waterfront places and trendy designer bars. Most are at their liveliest from about 10pm to 2am or 3am, especially from Thursday to Saturday, as people get into their night-time stride.

The old town is jammed with places. The hippest area since the late 1990s has been El Born, in the lower end of La Ribera, but there is an impressive scattering of bars across the lower half of the Barri Gòtic and in El Raval too. The latter especially is home to some fine old drinking institutions as well as a new wave of funky, inner city locales. The rapid rise in tourism since the late 1990s has, however, had the effect of turning the old-time nightlife scene into one dominated largely by foreigners.

A word of warning on La Rambla: While it can be pleasant enough to tinkle here, few locals would even think about it and bar prices tend to be exorbitant – €25 for a carafe of sangria is not unheard of.

Elsewhere, the series of squares and some streets of Gràcia are loaded up with bars. In the broad expanse of L'Eixample you need to know where to go. The upper end of Carrer d'Aribau is the busiest area (late in the week), along with the area around its continuation northwest of Avinguda Diagonal. The main concentration of gay bars is on and around Carrer del Consell de Cent, between Carrer de Balmes and Carrer de Muntaner.

La Rambla

Café Zurich (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 91 53; Carrer de Pelai 39; coffee & pastry €3-4; 𠄎 8pm-midnight) This is a prime spot, virtually on Plaça de Catalunya, for coffee, a paper and the passing

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Barcelona Pipa Club (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 47 32; Plaça Reial 3; 𠄎 Mon-Sat) This pipe-smokers' club is like someone's flat, with all sorts of interconnecting rooms and knick-knacks – notably the pipes after which the place is named. You buzz at the door and head two floors up. It is for members only until 11pm. Prop up one of the cosy bars or plunge into a lounge, but make sure you explore the whole labyrinth.

street theatre at this crucial city crossroads. It's a visible place to meet and start a night out downtown.

Café de l'Òpera (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 317 75 85; La Rambla 74) Opposite the Gran Teatre del Liceu opera house is La Rambla's most interesting café. Founded in 1876, it is pleasant for an early evening tippie or coffee and croissants. Head upstairs for a seat overlooking the boulevard.

Barri Gòtic

Café Royale (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 14 33; Carrer Nou de Zurbarano 3; 𠄎 6pm-2.30am) A high blue-fabric bench covers the wall opposite the bar, so grab a lounge in the spacious hardwood back area. Later on everyone gets in the mood for dancing.

Dot Light Club (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 302 70 26; Carrer Nou de Sant Francesc 7; 𠄎 8pm-3am) Dot remains one of the hippest club-style hangouts in this part of town. Each night the DJs change the musical theme, ranging from deep funk to deeper house.

La Clandestina (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 05 33; Baixada de Viladecols 2bis; 𠄎 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri & Sat) Opt for tea, a beer or a Middle Eastern *narghile* (the most elaborate way to smoke). You can even get a head massage or eat cake in this chilled tea shop.

La Macarena (Map pp278-9; Carrer Nou de Sant Francesc 5; admission up to €5; 𠄎 11.30pm-4.30am) A dark dance space where you can sit at the bar and quietly observe the goings on, which are almost in your face in this space-challenged locale that hovers between bar and club with DJs' electro and house offerings.

Sinatra (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 412 52 79; Carrer de les Heures 4-10; 𠄎 9pm-2.30am) A block from Plaça Reial is this busy corner locale. The fauna is largely comprised of foreigners who flop into splotchy cowhide-pattern lounges, perch on

BEER FOR BARCELONA

Moritz is back! This crisp lager, once Barcelona's most popular beer is available again after a hiatus of nearly 30 years. Brewed since 1856 by a company founded by Louis Moritz, an Alsatian brewer. The Barcelona brewery went belly-up in 1978 but now the descendants of Moritz (who kept the brand) are back in action. The **old brewery buildings** (Map pp274-5; Ronda Sant Antoni 39-43) are being turned into a cultural centre (under the direction of French architect Jean Nouvel), with restaurant, small-scale public demonstration brewery and museum, in addition to the company headquarters. The reborn beer first started appearing in bars in mid-2004. Curiously, although sold as a wholly Catalan product (the company claims the beer is brewed with Font d'Or mineral water from Montseny, north of Barcelona), it is actually made at La Zaragozaana brewery in Zaragoza (Aragón), a point that has irritated some local purists. Why they should be so upset is something of a mystery as the beer itself is really quite a tasty drop.

long stools beneath the mirror ball and sip Desperados beer.

El Raval

Bar Marsella (Map pp278-9; Carrer de Sant Pau 65; 10pm-2am Mon-Thu, 10pm-3am Fri & Sat) In business since 1820, the Marsella specialises in *absenta* (absinthe), a beverage known for its supposed narcotic qualities. Nothing much has changed here since the 19th century, and the local tittle certainly has a kick.

Boadas (Map pp278-9; 93 318 88 26; Carrer dels Tallers 1; 11 Mon-Sat) Inside the unprepossessing entrance is one of the city's oldest cocktail bars (famed for its daiquiris). The bow-tied waiters have been serving up their poison since 1933, and both Joan Miró and Hemingway tipped here.

Casa Almira (Map pp274-5; 93 318 99 17; Carrer de Joaquim Costa 33) In business since the 1860s, this unchanged corner drinkery is dark and intriguing, with Modernista décor and a mixed clientele.

Corto Club (Map pp274-5; 93 302 27 95; Carrer dels Tallers 68; admission sometimes €5; 10pm-5am) Here's a late-night bar you can stumble into without the trouble of lining up to enter a club. Music, sometimes live, ranges from funk to bossa nova.

Kentucky (Map pp278-9; 93 318 28 78; Carrer de l'Arc del Teatre 11; 11 Tue-Sat) All sorts of odd bods from the *barri* (district) and beyond squeeze in to this long, narrow bar late at night. Opening times (which can mean until 5am) depend in part on the presence (or rather absence) of the law in the street.

London Bar (Map pp278-9; 93 318 52 61; Carrer Nou de la Rambla 34-36; 11 7.30pm-5am Tue-Sun) If you still need a drink after 3am this is your best bet. Open since 1909, it started as a hangout for circus

hands and has some Modernista touches and the occasional music act way out back.

Zentraus (Map pp278-9; 93 443 80 78; www.zentraus.com; Rambla del Raval 41; 11 Tue-Sat) Mellow drum 'n' bass earlier in the week rises to a deep-house crescendo on Saturdays in this deep, dark early-evening dance-and-drink den. You can get a bite to eat at lunchtime too.

La Ribera

Gimlet (Map pp278-9; 93 310 10 27; Carrer del Rec 24) White-jacketed bar staff, with all the appropriate aplomb, will whip you up a gimlet, or any other classic cocktail your heart desires (around €6) as you crowd in around the curving bar.

La Vinya Del Senyor (Map pp278-9; 93 310 33 79; Plaça de Santa Maria del Mar 5; 11 noon-1am Tue-Sun) The wine list is as long as *War & Peace*, and the terrace lies in the shadow of Santa Maria del Mar. You can crowd inside the tiny wine bar itself or take a bottle upstairs to the one available table.

Va de Vi (Map pp278-9; 93 319 29 00; Carrer dels Banys Vells 16; 11 6pm-2am) The wonderful Gothic setting, all heavy stone arches, is perfect for tasting a broad selection of Spanish wines. You can also order nibbles.

Port Vell & the Coast

The Barcelona beach scene, apart from the roasting of countless bodies, warms up to dance sounds in the summer months. In addition to waterfront restaurants and bars (especially around Port Olímpic), a string of *chiringuitos* (little provisional bars) sets up along the beaches. Most serve food and some turn into mini-clubs on the sand from the afternoon and on to about 1am. Most are strung along from Platja de Bogatell to Platja de Nova Mar Bella.

CDLC (Map pp268-9; 93 224 04 70; Passeig Marítim 32; 11 noon-3am) Seize the night by the scruff at the Carpe Diem Lounge Club, the perfect place for your first drink lounging back in semi-Oriental surrounds. You could choose to eat here too, but tables are shuffled away about midnight. Ideal for a warm-up before heading to the nearby clubs.

Daguiri (Map pp268-9; 93 221 51 09; Carrer de Grau i Torras 59; 11 11am-1am Thu-Mon) Foreigners who have found seaside nirvana in Barcelona, hang out in this chilled bar back from the beach. A curious crowd of crusties and switched-on dudes chats over light meals and a beer.

L'Eixample & Around

Berlin (Map pp272-3; 93 200 65 42; Carrer de Muntaner 240; 11 10am-1.30am Mon-Wed, 10am-3am Thu-Sat) This elegant corner chill-out space offers views over the Diagonal, a cluster of tables outside, and designer lounges downstairs.

Dry Martini (Map pp272-3; 93 217 50 72; Carrer d'Aribau 162-166) Waiters will serve up the best dry martini in town, or whatever else your heart desires, in this classic cocktail lounge. The G&T is enormous.

Les Gens Que J'aime (Map pp272-3; 93 215 68 79; Carrer de València 286) This intimate relic of the 1960s offers chilled jazz music in the background, and a cosy scattering of velvet-backed lounges around tiny dark tables.

Michael Collins Pub (Map pp272-3; 93 459 19 64; Plaça de la Sagrada Família 4; 11 noon-3am) To be sure of a little Catalan-Irish craic, this barn-sized and storming pub is just the ticket.

Premier (Map pp272-3; 93 532 16 50; Carrer de Provença 236; 11 9am-2.30am) Relax at the bar or in a lounge in this funky little French-run cocktail bar. The wine list is almost exclusively French, but you can opt for that resurrected Barcelona brew, Moritz (see opposite) or a *mojito* (Cuban rum cocktail).

Gràcia

Maria (Map pp272-3; Carrer de Maria 5) Even the music hasn't changed since this place got going in the late 1970s. Lovers of rock 'n' roll will enjoy sinking beers here, perhaps over a game of pool.

Sabor Cubano (Map pp272-3; 93 600 262003; Carrer de Francisco Giner 32; 11 10pm-2.30am Mon-Sat) A mixed crowd of Cubans and fans of the Caribbean island come to drink *mojitos* and shake their stuff in this home of *ron y son* (rum and sound).

Tibidabo & Around

Mirablau (Map pp268-9; 93 418 58 79; Plaça del Doctor Andreu; 11 11am-5am) Wander downstairs after 11pm to join the beautiful people in the squeeze-me small dance space. The views over sparkling Barcelona below are magic.

Montjuïc & Poble Sec

Maumau Underground (Map pp274-5; 93 441 80 15; www.maumauunderground.com; Carrer de la Fontrodona 33; 11 11pm-2.30am Thu & Sun, 11pm-3am Fri & Sat) Funk, soul, hip-hop and more is on the programme in this Poble Sec music and dance haunt. Above the backlit bar a huge screen pours forth psychedelic images.

Tinta Roja (Map pp274-5; 93 443 32 43; Carrer de la Creu dels Molers 17; 11 8pm-1am Wed & Thu, 8pm-3am Fri & Sat, 7pm-midnight Sun) Sprinkled with an eclectic collection of furnishings, dimly lit in violets, reds and yellows, the 'Red Ink' is an intimate spot for a drink, and the occasional show in the back.

ENTERTAINMENT

To keep up with what's on, pick up a copy of the weekly listings magazine, *Guia del Ocio* (€1) from newsstands. The daily papers also have listings sections and the **Palau de la Virreina** (Map pp278-9; 93 301 77 75; La Rambla de Sant Josep 99; 11 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) information office can clue you in to present and forthcoming events.

The easiest way to get hold of *entradas* (tickets) for most venues throughout the city is through the **Caixa de Catalunya's Tel-Entrada** (93 902 101212; www.telentrada.com) service or **Servi-Caixa** (93 902 332211; www.servicaixa.com in Catalan & Spanish). Another one to try for concerts is **Tick Tack Ticket** (93 902 105025; www.ticktackticket.com). There's a *venta de localidades* (ticket office) on the ground floor of the **El Corte Inglés** (Map pp274-5; 93 402 40222; www.elcorteingles.es/entradas in Spanish; Plaça de Catalunya) and at some of its other branches around town (you can also buy tickets through El Corte Inglés by phone and online), and at the **FNAC store** (Map pp278-9; 93 902 100632; Plaça de Catalunya) in the El Triangle shopping centre on the same square.

You can purchase some half-price tickets at the Caixa de Catalunya desk in the **Oficina d'Informació de Turisme de Barcelona** (Map pp274-5; 93 285 38 34; www.barcelonaturisme.com; Plaça de Catalunya 17-S underground; 11 9am-9pm). To qualify, you must purchase the tickets in person no more than three hours before the start of the show you wish to see. The system is known as Tiquet-3.

Clubs

Barcelona clubs are spread a little more thinly than bars across the city. They tend to open from around midnight until 5am or 6am.

Distrito Diagonal (Map pp272-3; Avinguda Diagonal 442; 10pm-4am Wed & Thu, 10pm-8am Fri & Sat) It's hard to categorise this narrow, red-lit bar with the dance space up the back, but it's hard to resist a place that stays up so late on weekends, and for free if you're in before 4am! After 4am on Friday and Saturday it's €15.

Elephant (Map pp268-9; 93 334 02 58; www.elephantbcn.com; Passeig dels Til·lers 1; admission Wed-Thu & Sun free, Fri & Sat €15; 11pm-3am Wed, 11pm-5am Thu-Sun) Getting in here is like being invited to some Beverly Hills private party. Models and wannabes mix freely, as do the drinks. A big tent-like dance space is the main game here.

Karma (Map pp278-9; 93 302 56 80; Plaça Reial 10; admission €8; 1 Tue-Sun) This basement place heaves to the sounds of indie, rock, punk and even '80s disco.

La Paloma (Map pp274-5; 93 301 68 97; Carrer del Tigre 27; admission €8; 1 Thu-Sat) Draped in voluptuous red, this former theatre and still-functioning ballroom metamorphoses into a club later in the night. On Friday and Saturday the ballroom theme continues until 2am, after which acid sounds take over with So Rebel Club.

Luz De Gas (Map pp272-3; 93 209 77 11; www.luzdegas.com; Carrer de Muntaner 246; admission up to €15) Set in a grand theatre that is frequently the scene of live acts, this club attracts a crowd of well-dressed beautiful people, whose tastes in music vary according to the night, from Sixties Saturday to soul on Thursday.

Moog (Map pp278-9; 93 301 72 82; www.masimas.com/moog; Carrer de l'Arc del Teatre 3; admission €9) This fun, minuscule club is a downtown hit. In the main downstairs dance area, DJs dish out house, techno and electro, while upstairs you can groove to indie and occasional classic pop.

Otto Zutz (Map pp272-3; 93 238 07 22; Carrer de Lincoln 15; admission €15; 1 Tue-Sat) Beautiful people only need apply for entry into this three-floor dance den. Head upstairs for house or upstairs for funk and soul. Friday is hip-hop night.

Razzmatazz (Map pp268-9; 93 272 09 10; Carrers dels Almogàvers 122 & de Pamplona 88; 1 Fri & Sat) A half-dozen blocks back from Port Olímpic is this stalwart of Barcelona's club and concert scene, with five clubs in one huge space.

Sala Apolo (Map pp274-5; 93 441 40 01; www.sala-apollo.com; Carrer Nou de la Rambla 113; admission €6-12; 12.30am-5am Wed-Sat, 10.30pm-3.30am Sun) In this old theatre the Nitsclub team provides house, techno and break-beat sounds on weekends. On Thursday night it's The Powder Room, with funk and rare grooves.

Sutton Club (Map pp272-3; 93 414 42 17; www.thesuttonclub.com; Carrer de Tuset 13; admission €12; 1 Tue-Sat) A classic club with mainstream sounds, this place inevitably attracts just about everyone pouring in and out of the nearby bars, at some stage in the evening.

Cinemas

Foreign films, shown with subtitles and their original soundtrack, rather than dubbed, are marked *VO* (*versión original*) in movie listings. A ticket usually costs between €5.80 and €6.40 but most cinemas have a weekly *día del espectador* (viewer's day), often Monday or Wednesday, when they charge around €4. The cinemas listed here show *VO* films.

Filmoteca (Map pp272-3; 93 410 75 90; Avinguda de Sarrià 31-33; admission €2.70) Specialises in film seasons that concentrate on particular directors, styles and eras of film.

Icària Yelmo Cineplex (Map pp268-9; 93 221 75 85; www.yelmocineplex.es in Spanish; Carrer de Salvador Espriu 61) A massive complex where all the cinemas offer undubbed movies.

Imax (Map pp278-9; 93 225 11 11; Moll d'Espanya; www.imaxintegral.com) This is the city's 3D big screen experience, great for kids and not bad for adults either! **Méliès Cinemes** (Map pp268-9; 93 451 00 51; Carrer de Villarroel 102) Old classics in the original.

Renoir Floridablanca (Map pp274-5; 93 93 426 33 37; www.cinesrenoir.com in Spanish, bookings www.cinetradas.com in Spanish; Carrer de Floridablanca 135) Art-house cinema on the edge of El Raval.

Verdi (Map pp272-3; 93 238 79 90; Carrer de Verdi 32) One of the most popular art-house cinemas in town, in the heart of Gràcia, and surrounded by bars and eateries.

Verdi Park (Map pp272-3; Carrer de Torrijos 49) Also operated by Verdi.

Theatre

Theatre is almost always performed in Catalan or Spanish. For more information on all that's happening in the theatre, head for the information office at Palau de la Virreina (p282), where you'll find leaflets and *Teatre BCN*, the monthly listings guide.

Teatre Lliure (Map pp268-9; 93 289 27 70; www.teatrelivre.com; Plaça de Margarida Xirgu s/n, Montjuïc; 1 box office 5-8pm) Consisting of two separate theatre spaces, the 'Free Theatre' puts on a variety of serious, quality drama, pretty much exclusively in Catalan.

Teatre Mercat de les Flors (Map pp268-9; 93 426 18 75; Carrer de Lleida 59) At the foot of Montjuïc, this is an important venue for music, dance and drama. The box office opens one hour before the show.

Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (Map pp268-9; 93 306 57 00; www.tnc.es in Catalan & Spanish; Plaça de les Arts 1) Ricard Bofill's ultra-neoclassical theatre hosts a wide range of performances, principally drama but occasionally also dance and other performances.

Teatre Romea (Map pp278-9; 93 301 55 04; www.focus.es in Catalan & Spanish; Carrer de l'Hospital 51; 1 box office 4.30-8pm Tue-Sun) This theatre is a reference point for quality drama in Barcelona. It puts on a range of interesting plays – usually classics with a contemporary flavour.

Live Music

There's a good choice most nights of the week. Many venues double as bars and/or clubs. Starting time is rarely before 10pm. Admission charges range from nothing to €20 – the higher prices often include a drink. Note that some of the clubs previously mentioned, including Razzmatazz (opposite), Sala Apolo (opposite) and La Paloma (opposite), occasionally stage concerts too. Keep an eye on listings.

Big-name acts, either Spanish or from abroad, often perform at venues such as the 17,000-capacity Palau Sant Jordi (p300) on Montjuïc or the Teatre Mercat de les Flors (above), at the foot of Montjuïc.

Bikini (Map pp268-9; 93 322 08 00; www.bikiniibcn.com; Carrer de Deu i Mata 105; admission €10-20; 1 mid-night-5am Wed-Sun) This multi-hall dance space frequently stages quality acts ranging from funk guitar to rock. Performances generally start around 10pm and the club then swings into gear around midnight.

Harlem Jazz Club (Map pp278-9; 93 310 07 55; Carrer de la Comtessa de Sobradiel 8; admission up to €10; 1 8pm-4am

Tue-Thu & Sun, 8pm-5am Fri & Sat) This narrow, smoky, old-town dive is one of the best spots in town for jazz. Every now and then they mix it up with a little rock, Latin or blues.

Jamboree (Map pp278-9; 93 319 17 89; www.masimas.com/jamboree; Plaça Reial 17; admission up to €10; 1 10.30pm-5am) Concerts start at 11pm and proceed until about 2am at the latest, at which point punters convert themselves into clubbers. Some of the great names of jazz and blues have filled the air with their sonorous contributions.

La Cova del Drac – Jazzroom (Map pp268-9; 93 319 17 89; www.masimas.com/jazzroom; Carrer de Vallmajor 33; admission €10-20; 1 9pm-3am) This is a good, if awkwardly located, spot for jazz sessions most nights of the week. On weekends it can stay open as late as 5am.

Sidecar Factory Club (Map pp278-9; 93 302 15 86; www.sidecarfactoryclub.com; Plaça Reial 7; admission €8-15; 1 10pm-5am Tue-Sat) Downstairs from the bar and eatery are the red-tinged bowels of the club that opens for live music most nights. Just about anything goes, from UK indie pop through to country punk. Most shows start at 10pm (Thursday to Saturday).

FLAMENCO

Although quite a few important flamenco artists grew up in the *barris* of Barcelona, opportunities for seeing good performances of this essentially Andalusian dance and music are limited. A few *tablaos* (tourist-oriented locales that stage flamenco performances) are scattered about. For more on flamenco, see p67.

Sala Tarantos (Map pp278-9; 93 318 30 67; http://masimas.com/tarantos; Plaça Reial 17; admission from €5; 1 10pm-5am Mon-Sat) This basement locale is the stage for some of the best flamenco to pass through Barcelona. You have to keep an eye out for quality acts. For lower-grade stuff, a *tablaó* is put on most nights between around 8.30pm and 11pm. The place converts into a club later.

Tablaó Cordobés (Map pp278-9; 93 317 66 53; www.tablaocordobes.com; La Rambla 35; show €30, with dinner €60; 1 shows 8.15pm, 10pm & 11.30pm) This long-standing *tablaó* is typical of the genre. Generally people book for the dinner and show.

Tablaó de Carmen (Map pp268-9; 93 325 68 95; www.tablaodecarmen.com; Carrer dels Arcs 9, Poble Espanyol; show €31, dinner & show €59; 1 shows 9.30pm & 11.30pm Tue-Sun) Named after the great Barcelona *bailaora* (flamenco dancer) Carmen Amaya, the set-up at this establishment is similar to that at the Tablaó Cordobés.

TOP FIVE CLUBS

- Otto Zutz (right)
- Razzmatazz (right)
- La Paloma (above)
- Elephant (above)
- Sutton Club (right)

CLASSICAL MUSIC & OPERA

Guia del Ocio has ample listings, but the monthly *Informatiu Musical* leaflet has the best coverage of classical music (as well as other genres). You can pick it up at tourist offices and the Palau de la Virreina (p282).

Gran Teatre del Liceu (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 485 99 00; www.liceubarcelona.com; La Rambla dels Caputxins 51-59; 11am-8.30pm Mon-Fri) Barcelona's grand opera house, rebuilt after fire in 1999, has world-class opera, dance and classical-music recitals. Tickets can cost from €7.50 for a cheap seat behind a pillar, to €150 for a well-positioned night at the opera. The box office opens an hour before the show on the weekend.

L'Auditori (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 247 93 00; www.auditori.org; Carrer de Lepant 150; admission €10-45; 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) Barcelona's impressive modern home for serious music lovers. L'Auditori puts on plenty of orchestral, chamber, religious and other music throughout the year.

Palau de la Música Catalana (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 295 72 00; www.palaumusica.org; Carrer de Sant Francesc de Paula 2; admission €12-165; 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) This Modernista delight is the traditional centre for classical and choral music. It has a busy and wide-ranging programme.

Dance**SARDANA**

The best chance you have of seeing people dancing the *sardana* (the Catalan folk dance) is at 7pm on Wednesday, 6.30pm on Saturday or noon on Sunday in front of the Catedral (p286). You can also see the dancers during some of the city's festivals. They join hands to form ever-widening circles, placing their bags or coats in the centre. The dance is intricate but hardly flamboyant. The steps and the accompanying brass-and-reed music are at times jolly, at times melancholy, rising to occasional crescendos, then quietening down again.

Sport**BULLFIGHTING**

Barcelona city council has declared itself against bullfighting but some citizens continue to be strongly attached to this controversial activity. Fights are staged on Sunday afternoon in spring and summer at the **Plaça de Braus Monumental** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 245 58 02; cnr Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes & Carrer de la Marina; admission €19-120; tickets 11am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun). The 'fun' starts at around 6pm. Tickets are available at the arena or through ServiCaixa.

FOOTBALL

FC Barcelona (Barça for aficionados) has one of the best stadiums in Europe – the 100,000-capacity **Camp Nou** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 902 189900; www.fcbarcelona.com; 11 tickets 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-6pm Mon-Fri) in the west of the city. Tickets for national-league games are available at the stadium and theoretically through the **ServiCaixa** (☎ 902 332211; www.servicaixa.com in Catalan & Spanish) ticketing service (although this does not always seem to work if you are not a member). They cost around €30 to €120, depending on the seat and match.

FORMULA ONE

Alonso and Co come to Barcelona every April/May to rip around the track at Montmeló, about a 30-minute drive north of the city. A seat for the Grand Prix race at the **Circuit de Catalunya** (☎ 93 571 97 71; www.circuitcat.com) can cost anything from €110 to €428, depending largely on how far in advance you book. Purchase by phone, at the track, or online with **ServiCaixa** (☎ 902 332211; www.servicaixa.com in Catalan & Spanish). You can get a regular *rodalies* train to Montmeló (€1.30, 30 minutes) but will need to walk about 3km, or find a local taxi (about €8 to €10) to reach the track.

SHOPPING

All of Barcelona seems to be lined with unending ranks of fashion and design stores. Maxing out credit cards is a definite risk in this town. Alongside the latest modes, all sorts of curious traditional shops offer everything from coffee and nuts to candles, from sweets made in convents to amusing condoms.

Most of the mainstream fashion and design stores can be found on a shopping 'axis' that looks like the hands of a clock set at about twenty to five. From **Plaça de Catalunya** it heads along **Passeig de Gràcia**, turning left into **Avinguda Diagonal**. From here as far as **Plaça de la Reina Maria Cristina** (especially the final stretch from **Plaça de Francesc Macià**), the Diagonal is jammed with shopping options. The T1 Tommbús service (see p332) has been laid on for the ardent shopper.

Fashion does not end in the chic streets of L'Eixample and **Avinguda Diagonal**. Since the mid-1990s, the El Born area in La Ribera has been humming and in the wake of bars and restaurants have come hip little boutiques, especially those purveying young, fun fashion. **Custo Barcelona** has a branch here. Another

POKING ABOUT THE MARKETS

Large **Els Encants Vells** ('The Old Charms'; Map pp268-9; 11am-6.45pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat), also known as the Fira de Bellcaire, is the city's principal flea market. There is an awful lot of junk here, but you can turn up interesting items if you are prepared to hunt around.

The **Barri Gòtic** is livened up by an **arts and crafts market** (Map pp278-9; **Plaça de Sant Josep Oriol**; 11am-8pm) on Saturday and Sunday, the antiques **Mercat Gòtic** (Map pp278-9; **Plaça Nova**; 11am-10pm) on Thursday, and a **coin- and stamp-collectors' market** (Map pp278-9; **Plaça Reial**; 11am-2pm) on Sunday morning. Just beyond the western edge of El Raval, the punters at the **Mercat de Sant Antoni** (Map pp274-5; 11am-8.30pm) dedicate Sunday morning to old maps, stamps, books and cards.

Once every fortnight, from Friday to Sunday, gourmards can poke about the homemade honey, sweets, cheese and other edible delights at the **Fira Alimentació** (Map pp278-9; **Plaça del Pi**).

bubbling fashion strip is the **Barri Gòtic's Carrer d'Avinyó**. For second-hand stuff, head for **El Raval**, especially **Carrer de la Riera Baixa**.

A squadron of antiques stores is scattered about **Carrer dels Banys Nous** in the **Barri Gòtic**, in whose labyrinthine lanes you can find all sorts of curious stores. For food, from cheese to nuts, some gems glitter in **El Born**.

The single best-known department store is **El Corte Inglés** **Plaça de Catalunya** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 306 38 00; **Plaça de Catalunya 14**; 11am-10pm Mon-Sat); **Plaça de la Reina Maria Cristina** (Map pp268-9; **Avinguda Diagonal 617**), with branches around town. **FNAC** (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 344 18 00; **Plaça de Catalunya 4**; 11am-10pm Mon-Sat), the French book, CD and electronics emporium, has a couple of branches around town. **Bulevard Rosa** (☎ 93 215 44 99; **Passeig de Gràcia 55-57**; 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) is one of the most interesting arcades, while the **Maremàgnum** (☎ 93 225 81 00; www.maremagnum.es; **Moll d'Espanya**) shopping centre can be a diversion when wandering around the **Port Vell** waterfront.

Winter sales officially start on or around 10 January and their summer equivalents on or around 5 July.

Art Galleries

Want some contemporary art? You'll find small galleries and designer stores on **Carrer del Doctor Dou**, **Carrer d'Elisabets** and **Carrer dels Àngels** (Map pp278-9). The classiest concentration of galleries is on and around the short stretch of **Carrer del Consell de Cent** between **Rambla de Catalunya** and **Carrer de Balmes** (Map pp272-3).

Fashion

Antonio Miró (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 487 06 70; www.antoniomiro.es; **Carrer del Consell de Cent 349**) **Mr Miró** is one of Barcelona's *haute couture* kings.

He concentrates on light, natural fibres to produce smart, unpretentious men's and women's fashion.

Custo Barcelona (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 78 93; www.custo-barcelona.com; **Plaça de les Olles 7**) **Custo** bewitches people the world over with a youthful, psychedelic panoply of women's and men's fashion.

Mango (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 215 75 30; www.mango.com; **Passeig de Gràcia 65**; 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) **At home** in a modest Modernista townhouse (and in endless other locations), this busy hall of a store shines bright with the local fashion-chain's flagship items – a host of light, fun women's clothing and leather accessories.

Zara (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 318 76 75; www.zara.es; **Passeig de Gràcia 16**) **Started** in Galicia, **Zara** is one of the great success stories of modern *prêt-à-porter*. Women's fashion is the name of the game and this megastore on Barcelona's top shopping street is the most obvious of its outlets.

Food & Drink

Casa Gispert (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 319 75 35; **Carrer dels Sombrierers 23**) **Prize-winning Casa Gispert** has been toasting almonds and selling all manner of dried fruit since 1851. Pots and jars piled high on the shelves contain an unending variety of crunchy titbits.

J Murrià (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 215 57 89; **Carrer de Roger de Llúria 85**) **Ramon Casas** designed the Modernista shop-front ads for this delicious delicatessen, where the shelves groan under the weight of speciality food from around Catalonia and beyond.

Homewares

Vinçon (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 215 60 50; www.vincon.com; **Passeig de Gràcia 96**; 11am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) **Vinçon** has the slickest designs in furniture

and household goods, local and imported. The building once belonged to the Modernista artist Ramon Casas.

Shoes

Camper (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 215 63 90; www.camper.com; Carrer de València 249) This Mallorcan success story is the Clarks of Spain. Its shoes range from the eminently sensible to the stylishly fashionable.

Farrutx (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 215 06 85; www.farrutx.es; Carrer del Rosselló 218; 10am-8.30pm) Farrutx specialises in exclusive footwear for uptown gals.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Aeroport del Prat (☎ 902 404704; www.aena.es for all Spanish airports) is 12km southwest of the centre at El Prat de Llobregat. Barcelona is a big international and domestic destination, with direct flights from North America as well as many European cities.

Several budget airlines, including Ryanair, use Girona-Costa Brava airport, 11km south of Girona and about 80km north of Barcelona. Buses connect with Barcelona's Estació del Nord bus station (right).

For general information on flights, see the Transport chapter (p859). See Travel Agencies on p283 for some suggestions on where to pick up air tickets.

Boat

BALEARIC ISLANDS

Regular passenger and vehicular ferries to/from the Balearic Islands, operated by Acciona Trasmediterrànea (☎ 902 454645; www.trasmediterranea.es), dock along both sides of the Moll de Barcelona wharf in Port Vell (Map pp274-5).

For information on schedules and fares, see p629.

ITALY

The Grimaldi group's **Grandi Navi Veloci** (☎ 899 199 069 in Italy; ☎ 902 410200, 93 443 98 98 in Spain; www1.gnv.it; Moll de San Beltran) runs a high-speed, roll-on roll-off luxury ferry service from Genoa to Barcelona three times a week (18 hours). **Grimaldi Ferries** (☎ 93 502 81 63 in Spain, 081 496444 in Italy; www.grimaldi-ferries.com) has a similar service between Barcelona and Civitavecchia (for Rome) up to six days a week, with a sailing time of 20 hours.

Bus

Long distance buses for destinations throughout Spain leave from the **Estació del Nord** (Map pp268-9; ☎ 902 260606; www.barcelonanord.com; Carrer d'Alii Bei 80). A plethora of companies operates services to different parts of the country, although many come under the umbrella of **Alsa-Enatcar** (☎ 902 422242; www.alsa.es). There are frequent services to Madrid, Valencia and Zaragoza (up to 20 a day) and several daily departures to such distant destinations as Burgos, Santiago de Compostela and Seville (see trip details, opposite).

Eurolines (☎ 93 490 40 00; www.eurolines.com), in conjunction with local carriers all over Europe, is the main international carrier. It runs services across Europe and to Morocco from Estació del Nord (above) and **Estació d'Autobusos de Sants** (Map pp268-9; Carrer de Viriat), which is next to Estació Sants Barcelona. For information and tickets in Barcelona, contact Alsa-Enatcar (above). Another carrier is **Linebús** (☎ 902 335533; www.linebus.com).

Within Catalonia, much of the Pyrenees and the entire Costa Brava are served only by buses, as train services are limited to important railheads such as Girona, Figueres, Lleida, Ripoll and Puigcerdà. If there is a train, take it – they're usually more comfortable and convenient. Various bus companies operate across the region, mostly from Estació del Nord (above):

Alsina Graells (☎ 902 33 04 00; www.continental-auto.es) Part of the Continental-Auto group, it serves destinations west and northwest, such as Vielha, La Seu d'Urgell and Lleida.

Barcelona Bus (☎ 902 130014; www.sagales.com in Catalan/Spanish) Runs buses to Girona (and Girona-Costa Brava airport), Figueres and parts of the Costa Brava.

Hispano-Igualadina (☎ 93 804 44 51) Serves much of central Catalonia from Estació d'Autobusos de Sants.

SARFA (☎ 902 302025; www.sarfa.com) The main operator on and around the Costa Brava.

TEISA (Map pp272-3; ☎ 972 20 48 68; www.teisa-bus.com; Carrer de Pau Claris 117) Covers a large part of the eastern Catalan Pyrenees from Girona and Figueres. Buses from Barcelona head for Camprodon via Ripoll and Olot via Besalú. To get here, take the metro to Passeig de Gràcia.

Departures from Estació del Nord include the following (where frequencies vary, the lowest figure is usually for Sunday; fares quoted are the lowest available):

Destination	Frequency (per day)	Duration	Cost
Almeria	5	11¼-13¼ hr	€56.30
Burgos	5-6	7¾-9 hr	€31
Granada	8	12-14¼ hr	€61.95
Madrid	up to 20	7½ hr	€25.05
Seville	1-2	15½ hr	€81.10
Valencia	up to 16	4¼-5¼ hr	€22.85
Zaragoza	up to 22	3½ hr	€12.20

Car & Motorcycle

Autopistas (tollways) head out of Barcelona in most directions, including the C31/C32 to the southern Costa Brava; the C32 to Sitges; the C16 to Manresa (with a turn-off for Montserrat); and the AP7 north to Girona, Figueres and France, and south to Tarragona and Valencia (turn off along the AP2 for Lleida, Zaragoza and Madrid). The toll-free alternatives, such as the A2 north to Girona, Figueres and France, and west to Lleida and beyond, or the A7 to Tarragona, tend to be busy and slow.

RENTAL

Avis, Europcar, Hertz and several other big companies have desks at the airport, Estació Sants train station and Estació del Nord bus terminus:

Avis (Map pp272-3; ☎ 902 135531, 93 237 56 80; www.avis.es; Carrer de Còrsega 293-295)

Europcar (Map pp272-3; ☎ 91 343 45 12, 93 302 05 43; www.europcar.es; Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes 680)

Hertz (Map pp272-3; ☎ 91 749 90 69, 93 217 80 76; www.hertz.es; Carrer de Tuset 10)

National/Atesa (Map pp274-5; ☎ 902 100101, 93 323 07 01; www.atesa.es; Carrer de Muntaner 45)

Pepecar (www.pepecar.com) La Rambla (Map pp278-9; ☎ 807 414243; Plaça de Catalunya): Estació Sants Barcelona (Map pp268-9; Carrer de Béjar 68) This company specialises in cheap rentals (especially the two-person Smart). If you book far enough ahead, it can cost around €10.50 a day. There's also an outlet at Aeroport del Prat.

Vanguard (Map pp272-3; ☎ 93 439 38 80; www.vanguardrent.com; Carrer de Viladomat 297) For motorbikes.

Train

The main international and domestic station is **Estació Sants** (Map pp268-9; Plaça dels Països Catalans), 2.5km west of La Rambla. Other stops on long-distance lines are **Catalunya** (Map pp274-5; Plaça de Catalunya) and **Passeig de Gràcia** (Map pp272-3; cnr Passeig de Gràcia & Carrer d'Arago). Information windows operate at Estació Sants and Passeig

de Gràcia station. Sants station has a **consigna** (left-luggage lockers: small/big locker per 24hr €3/4.50; 11 5.30am-11pm), a tourist office, a telephone and fax office, currency-exchange booths and ATMs.

INTERNATIONAL

For information on getting to Barcelona by rail from European cities, see the Transport chapter (p864).

Two daily direct Talgo services connect Montpellier in France with Estació Sants (€49 each way in *turista* class, 4¼ hours). A couple of other slower services (with a change of train at Portbou) also make this run. All stop in Perpignan.

From Estació Sants, up to 10 trains daily run to Cerbère (€26, 2½ hours), on the French side of the border, and five to Latour-de-Carol (€7.90, 3¼ hours). From these stations you have several onward connections to Montpellier and Toulouse, respectively.

DOMESTIC

There are trains to most large Spanish cities, with the usual huge range of train types and fares. All services depart from or pass through Estació Sants.

GETTING AROUND

The metro is the easiest way of getting around and reaches most places you're likely to visit (although not the airport). For some trips you need buses or FGC suburban trains. The tourist office gives out the comprehensive *Guia d'Autobusos Urbans de Barcelona*, which has a metro map and all bus routes.

For public-transport information, make a call to ☎ 010.

To/From the Airport

The **A1 Aerobús** (Map pp274-5, Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 415 60 20; one way €3.60; 30-40min) runs from the airport to Plaça de Catalunya via Plaça d'Espanya, Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes (on the corner of Carrer del Comte d'Urgell) and Plaça de la Universitat every 8-10 minutes from 6am to midnight Monday to Friday (from 6.30am to midnight on weekends and holidays). Departures from Plaça de Catalunya are from 5.30am to 11.15pm Monday to Friday (6am to 11.30pm on weekends and holidays) and go via Estació Sants and Plaça d'Espanya. Buy tickets on the bus. The travel time to/from the airport depends on traffic conditions.

Renfe's *rodalies* line 10 runs between the airport and Estació de França in Barcelona (about 35 minutes), stopping also at Estació Sants (the main train station) and central Passeig de Gràcia. Tickets cost €2.40, unless you have a T-10 multitransfer public transport ticket. The service from the airport starts at 6am and ends at 11.44pm daily.

A taxi to/from the centre, about a half-hour ride depending on traffic, costs between €18 and €24.

Sagalés (☎ 902 361550; www.sagales.com) runs hourly services from Girona-Costa Brava airport to Girona's main bus/train station (€1.75, 25 minutes) in connection with flights. The same company runs direct Barcelona Bus services to/from Estació del Nord bus station (p330) in Barcelona (one way/return €11/19, 70 minutes), connecting with flights.

Bicycle

Bike lanes have been laid out along quite a few main roads (such as Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, Avinguda Diagonal, Carrer d'Aragó, Avinguda de la Meridiana and Carrer de la Marina) and a growing web of secondary streets, so it is quite possible to get around on two ecological wheels.

Biciclot (Map pp268-9; ☎ 93 221 97 78; www.biciclot.net; Passeig Marítim; per hr/day €5/19; 19 9am-3pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm & 4-8pm Sat & Sun May-Oct; 10am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov-Apr) A handy seaside location.

Un Cotxe Menys (Map pp278-9; ☎ 93 268 21 05; www.bicicletabarcelona.com; Carrer de la Espartería 3; per hr/half-day/full day/week €6/12/16.50/65; 19 10am-2pm Mon-Fri) Can also organise bike tours around the old city and port.

Bus

The city transport authority, TMB (☎ 010; www.tmb.net), runs buses along most city routes every few minutes from 5am or 6am to 10pm or 11pm. Many routes pass through Plaça de Catalunya and/or Plaça de la Universitat (both on Map pp274-5). After 11pm, a reduced network of yellow *nitbusos* (night buses) runs until 3am or 5am. All *nitbus* routes pass through Plaça de Catalunya and most run about every 30 to 45 minutes.

BUS TURÍSTIC

This TMB-run bus service covers three circuits (44 stops) linking very nearly all the major tourist sights. See p312 for more information.

TOMBBUS

The T1 Tombbús (Map pp274-5) route operated by TMB is designed for shoppers and runs regularly (€1.40) from Plaça de Catalunya to Avinguda Diagonal and then west to Plaça de Pius XII, where it turns around. It passes landmarks such as El Corte Inglés (p329) – several of them – Bulevard Rosa and FNAC en route.

Car & Motorcycle

An effective one-way system makes traffic flow fairly smoothly, but you'll often find yourself flowing the way you don't want to go, unless you happen to have an adept navigator and a map that shows one-way streets.

PARKING

Limited parking in the Ciutat Vella is virtually all for residents only, with some metered parking. The narrow streets of Gràcia are not much better. The broad boulevards of L'Eixample are divided into blue and green zones. For non-residents they mean the same thing: limited meter parking. Fees vary but tend to hover around €2.25 an hour. Parking stations are also scattered all over L'Eixample, with a few in the old centre too. Prices vary.

Metro & FGC

The Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (TMB) metro (☎ 010; www.tmb.net) has six numbered and colour-coded lines (see the map, p918). The metro runs from 5am to midnight Sunday to Thursday, and 5am to 2am on Friday, Saturday and days immediately preceding holidays. Line 2 has access for the disabled and a handful of stations on other lines also have lifts (it is hoped all metro stations will have disabled access by 2007).

Suburban trains run by the Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC; ☎ 93 205 15 15; www.fgc.net) include a couple of useful city lines. One heads north from Plaça de Catalunya. A branch of it will get you to Tibidabo, and another within spitting distance of the Monestir de Pedralbes. Some trains along this line run beyond Barcelona to Sant Cugat, Sabadell and Terrassa.

The other FGC line heads to Manresa from Plaça d'Espanya, and is handy for the trip to Montserrat (p336).

These trains run from about 5am (only one or two services before 6am) to 11pm or midnight (depending on the line) Sunday to Thursday, and 5am to 2am on Friday and Saturday.

Three tram (☎ 902 193275; www.trambcn.com) lines run into the suburbs of greater Barcelona from Plaça de Francesc Macià and are of limited interest to visitors. Another line runs from behind the zoo near the Ciutadella-Vila Olímpica metro stop to Sant Adrià via Fórum. All standard transport passes are valid.

Taxi

Taxis charge €1.45 flag fall (€1.55 from 9pm to 7am weekdays and all day Saturday, Sunday and holidays) plus meter charges of €0.78 per kilometre (€1 at night and on weekends). A further €3 is added for all trips to/from the airport, and €0.90 for luggage bigger than 55cm x 35cm x 35cm. The trip from Estació Sants to Plaça de Catalunya, about 3km, costs about €8. You can call a taxi (☎ 93 225 00 00, 93 300 11 00, 93 303 30 33, 93 322 22 22) or flag them down. There's a taxi rank at the Monument a Colom (Map pp274-5) and one on Plaça de Catalunya (Map pp274-5), at the corner of La Rambla, too. General information is available on ☎ 010. The call-out charge is €2.93 (€3.66 at night and on weekends).

Fono Taxi (☎ 93 300 11 00) is one of several taxi companies with taxis adapted for the disabled. **Taxi Amic** (☎ 93 420 80 88; www.terra.es/personal/taxiamic) is a special taxi service for the disabled or difficult situations (transport of big objects). Book at least 24 hours in advance if possible.

Tickets & Targetas

The metro, FGC trains, *rodalies/cercanías* (Renfe-run local trains) and buses come under one zoned fare regime. Single-ride tickets on all standard transport within Zone 1 (which extends beyond the airport), except on Renfe trains, cost €1.20.

Targetes are multitransfer transport tickets. They are sold at most city-centre metro stations. The prices given here are for travel in Zone 1. Children under four travel free.

Targeta T-10 (€6.65) 10 rides (each valid for 1¼ hours) on the metro, buses and FGC trains. You can change between metro, FGC, *rodalies* and buses.

Targeta T-DIA (€5) Unlimited travel on all transport for one day.

Targeta T-50/30 (€27.55) For 50 trips within 30 days. Two-/three-/four-/five-day tickets for unlimited travel on all transport except the A1 Aerobús cost €9.20/13.20/16.80/20. Buy them at metro stations and tourist offices.

Monthly transport pass For unlimited use of all public transport (€42.75)

Train

Renfe runs local trains (*rodalies* or *cercanías*) to towns around Barcelona, as well as the airport. For ticket information see left.

Trixis

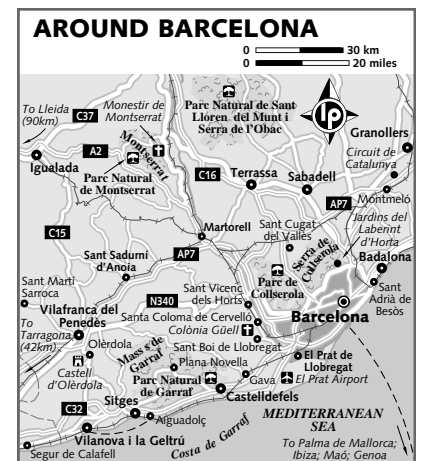
These three-wheeled cycle taxis (Map pp274-5; www.trixi.info; per half-hour/hour €10/18; 19 noon-8pm daily Jun-Oct) operate on the waterfront. They can take two passengers, and children aged three to 12 are half-price. You can find them near the Monument a Colom and in front of the Catedral.

AROUND BARCELONA

Need a break from the hubbub? Several options within easy reach present themselves. Sitges is a pretty seaside town southwest of Barcelona with thumping nightlife. Wine-lovers may want to explore the Penedès wine-making region, famous for its *cava*. From the hedonistic to the heavenly, head north for Catalonia's sacred mountain range, Montserrat. Closer to home, admire the genius of Gaudí at Colònia Güell.

THE OUTSKIRTS Colònia Güell

Apart from La Sagrada Família, the last grand project Gaudí turned his hand to was the creation of a Utopian textile-workers' complex, known as the Colònia Güell (☎ 93 630 58 07;



www.coloniaguellbarcelona.com; Santa Coloma de Cervelló; admission to crypt €4; 1 crypt 9am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Mar, info centre 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) outside Barcelona at Santa Coloma de Cervelló.

His main role was to erect the colony's church – workers' housing and the local co-operative were in the hands of other architects. Work on the church's crypt started in 1908 and proceeded for eight years, at which point interest in the whole idea fizzled. The crypt still serves as a working church.

This structure makes up an important part of Gaudí's oeuvre. The mostly brick-clad columns that support the ribbed vaults in the church's ceiling are inclined in much the way you might expect trees in a forest to lean at all angles (reminiscent also of Park Güell, which Gaudí was working on at much the same time). Gaudí had worked out the angles in such a way that their load would be transmitted from the ceiling to the earth, without the help of extra buttressing. Down to the wavy design of the pews, Gaudí's distinctive hand is visible.

Near the church spread the cute brick houses designed for the factory workers and still inhabited today. A short stroll away, the 23 factory buildings of a Modernista industrial complex, idle since the 1970s, have been brought back to life in a €60 million project under the direction of local building star Óscar Tusquets. Shops and businesses have moved in (or are being encouraged to do so) to the renovated complex. You can pick up a map at the information centre and wander around or join guided visits of the crypt alone (€5) or the crypt and former factory complex (€8) at noon on weekends. Several languages are theoretically catered for.

To get here, take FGC train S4, S7, S8 or S33 from Plaça d'Espanya.

SITGES

pop 24,470

Sitges attracts everyone from jet-setters to young travellers, honeymooners to weekend-ing families, and from Barcelona's night owls to an international gay crowd. The beach is long and sandy, the nightlife thumps until breakfast and there are lots of groovy boutiques if you need to spruce up your wardrobe. In winter Sitges can be dead, but it wakes up with a vengeance for Carnival, when the gay crowd puts on an outrageous show.

Information

Hospital Sant Joan (☎ 93 894 00 03; Carrer del Hospital) In the upper part of town.

Main tourist office (☎ 93 894 50 04; www.sitgestur.com; Carrer de Sinia Morera 1; 1 9am-8pm Jul–mid-Sep, 9am-2pm & 4-6.30pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep–Jun)

Policia Local (☎ 93 704 101092; Plaça d'Ajuntament) Behind the parish church.

Tourist office (☎ 93 811 06 11; Carrer de Fonollar s/n; 1 10am-1.30pm & 5-9pm Thu-Tue Jul–mid-Sep; 10.30am-2pm Wed-Fri, 11am-2pm & 4-7pm Sat, 11am-2.30pm Sun mid-Sep–Jun) Next door to Palau Maricel.

Sights & Activities

MUSEUMS

Three museums (☎ 93 894 03 64; adult/child €3.50/1.75, combined ticket to all museums €6.40/3.50; 1 10am-1.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Oct-Jun; 10am-2pm & 5-9pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep) serve as a timid counterweight to the general hedonism.

The **Museu Cau Ferrat** (Carrer de Fonollar) was built in the 1890s as a house-cum-studio by Santiago Rusiñol, Modernista artist and the man who attracted the art world to Sitges. In 1894, Rusiñol reawakened the public to the then unfashionable work of El Greco by parading two of the Cretan's canvases in from Sitges train station to Cau Ferrat. These are on show, along with the remainder of Rusiñol's rambling art-and-craft collection, which includes paintings by the likes of Picasso, Ramon Casas and Rusiñol himself.

Next door, the **Museu Maricel del Mar** (Carrer de Fonollar) houses art and handicrafts from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. The museum is part of the **Palau Maricel**, a stylistic fantasy built around 1910 by Miquel Utrillo (along with Rusiñol and Casas, one of the 'Quatre Gats', see p318).

The **Museu Romàntic** (Carrer de Sant Gaudenci 1) re-creates the lifestyle of a 19th-century Catalan landowning family, and contains a collection of several hundred antique dolls.

BEACHES

The main beach is divided by a series of breakwaters into sections with different names. A pedestrian promenade runs its whole length. In the height of summer, especially on Saturday and Sunday, the end nearest the **Església de Sant Bartomeu i Santa Tecla** gets jam-packed. Crowds thin out slightly towards the southwest end.

SITGES

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles

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Festivals & Events

Carnaval (dates change from year to year) in Sitges is a week-long riot just made for the extrovert, ambiguous and exhibitionist, capped by an extravagant gay parade that's held on the last night. June sees the **Sitges International Theatre Festival**, with a strong experimental leaning. The town's **Festa Major** (Major Festival) in late August features a huge firework display on the 23rd. And early October is the time for Sitges' **International Fantasy Film Festival**.

The town has planned a year-long programme of cultural events and exhibitions related to Santiago Rusiñol from June 2006 to mark the 75th anniversary of the artist's death.

Sleeping

Sitges has 47 hotels and *hostales*, but many close from around October to April, then are full in July and August, when prices are at their highest and booking is advisable. Many, including the following, are gay-friendly without being exclusively so. Gay folk looking for accommodation in Sitges can try Throb (www.throb.co.uk).

Pensió Maricel (☎ 93 894 36 27; www.milsa.com; Carrer d'En Tacó 13; d €65) This spot is one of the cheaper deals in town, just back from the beach in a tight lane. The 10 simple rooms are clean and spartan. Those looking on to the interior, without noteworthy views, are €10 cheaper. From the exterior ones you can get sea glimpses if you lean out.

Romàntic Hotel (☎ 93 894 83 75; www.hotelromantic.com; Carrer de Sant Isidre 33; s/d €74.50/110.75; a) These three adjoining 19th-century villas are presented in sensuous period style, with a leafy dining courtyard. If they have no rooms, ask about their other charming boutique hotel, **Hotel La Renaixença** (Carrer d'illa de Cuba 45), round the corner (the reception is at Romàntic Hotel). Indeed, it shares the street with several beautifully restored houses converted into enticing hotels.

Eating

Al Fresco (☎ 93 894 06 00; Carrer de Pau Barrabeig 4; meals €25-30; h dinner Wed-Sun) Hidden along a narrow stairway, masquerading as a street, is a charming hideaway with some interesting gastronomic twists. You could indulge in light curries or a *solomillo de canguro* (a prime cut of Australia's bouncing beast).

Costa Dorada (☎ 93 894 35 43; Carrer del Port Alegre; meals €30; h lunch & dinner Fri-Tue, lunch Wed) Old-world service with 1970s atmosphere (lots of tiles and bottles of wine on display) and reliable standards make the 'Gold Coast' a safe bet, especially for seafood, paella and *fideuà*.

La Nansa (☎ 93 894 94 19 27; Carrer de la Carreta 24; meals €30-35; h lunch & dinner Thu-Mon Feb-Dec) Cast just back from the waterfront up a little lane in a fine old house is this seafood specialist that does a good line in paella and other rice dishes.

Drinking & Entertainment

Much of Sitges' nightlife happens on one short pedestrian strip packed with humanity right through the night in summer: Carrer del 1er de Maig, Plaça de la Indústria and Carrer del Marqués de Montroig, all in a short line off the seafont. Carrer del 1er de Maig – also known as Calle del Pecado (Sin Street) – vibrates to the volume of 10 or so disco-bars, all trying to outdo each other in decibels.

You'll find more of the same, if slightly less intense, around the corner on Carrer de les Parel·lades, Carrer de Bonaire and Carrer de Sant Pere. Afterwards, there's clubbing at the nearby **Otto Zutz** (Port d'Aiguadolç) on the waterfront and **Pachà** (www.pachasitges.com; Carrer San Didac, Vallpineda), north of the town centre.

Bar Voramar (Carrer del Port Alegre 55) On Platja de Sant Sebastià, this is a 1960s throwback with nautical decoration and good music. Check it out for live jazz sessions.

Gay and gay-friendly bars abound. **El Horno** (Carrer de Juan Tarrida Ferratges 6) has a dark room to fumble about in and you can make hirsute pursuits at **Bear's Bar** (Carrer de Bonaire 17). For dancing late into the night, the **Organic Club** (Carrer de Bonaire 15; h 2.30-6am) is a popular gay club, one of two in town. If you need any toys, head for the **Mask** (Carrer de Bonaire 22) erotic shop.

Getting There & Away

From about 6am to 10pm, four *rodalies* per hour run from Estació Sants Barcelona to Sitges (€2.40, 30 minutes). The best road from Barcelona to Sitges is the C32 tollway. A direct bus run by Mon-Bus goes to Barcelona airport from near the tourist office.

MONTSERRAT

Montserrat (Serrated Mountain), 50km northwest of Barcelona, is a 1236m-high mountain of truly weird rock pillars, shaped by wind, rain and frost from a conglomeration of limestone, pebbles and sand that once lay under the sea. With the historic Benedictine Monestir de Montserrat, one of Catalonia's most important shrines, cradled at 725m on its side, it makes a great outing from Barcelona. From the mountain, on a clear day, you can see as far as the Pyrenees and even, if you're lucky, Mallorca.

Orientation & Information

The *cremallera* (rack-and-pinion train) and cable car both arrive on the mountainside, just below the monastery. From either of these, the main road curves (past a snack bar, cafeteria, information office and the Espai Audiovisual) round and up to the right, passing the blocks of Cel.les Abat Marcel, to enter Plaça de Santa Maria, at the centre of the monastery complex.

The information office (☎ 93 877 77 01; www.abadiamontserrat.net; h 9am-6pm) has information on the complex and walking trails.

Sights & Activities

MONESTIR DE MONTSERRAT

The monastery was founded in 1025 to commemorate a 'vision' of the Virgin on the mountain. Wrecked by Napoleon's troops in 1811, then abandoned as a result of anticlerical legislation in the 1830s, it was rebuilt from 1858. Today a community of about 80 monks lives here. Pilgrims come from far and wide to venerate *La Moreneta* (The Black Virgin), a

12th-century Romanesque wooden sculpture of Mary with the infant Jesus, which has been Catalonia's patron since 1881.

The two-part **Museu de Montserrat** (☎ 93 877 77 77; Plaça de Santa Maria; admission €5.50; h 10am-6pm) has an excellent collection, ranging from an Egyptian mummy and Gothic altarpieces to art by El Greco, Monet, Degas and Picasso. The **Espai Audiovisual** (admission €2, or free with Museu de Montserrat ticket; h 10am-6pm) is a walk-through multimedia space (with images and sounds) that illustrates the daily life and activities of the monks and the history and spirituality of the monastery.

From Plaça de Santa Maria you enter the courtyard of the 16th-century **basilica** (admission €5 incl La Moreneta; h 8am-8.15pm Jul-Sep), the monastery's church. The basilica's façade, with its carvings of Christ and the 12 Apostles, dates from 1900, despite its 16th-century Plateresque style. Opening times, when you can file past the image of the Black Virgin high above the basilica's main altar, vary according to season and the church closes from early October to June. Follow the signs to the **Cambri de la Mare de Déu** (h 8-10.30am & 12.15-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8-10.30am, 12.15-6.30pm & 7.30-8.15pm Sun & holidays) to the right of the main basilica entrance to see the Black Virgin.

If you're around the basilica at the right time, you'll catch a performance by the **Montserrat Boys' Choir** (Escolania; www.escolania.net; admission free; h performances 1pm Mon-Fri, noon & 6.45pm Sun Sep-Jun), reckoned to be Europe's oldest music school.

On your way out, have a look in the room, across the courtyard from the basilica entrance, filled with gifts and thank-you messages to the Montserrat Virgin, from people who give her the credit for all manner of happy events. The souvenirs range from plaster casts to wedding dresses.

If you want to see where the holy image of the Virgin was discovered, take the **Santa Cova funicular** (one way/return €1.60/2.50; h every 20min 10am-5.35pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4.25pm Nov-Mar) down from the main area.

THE MOUNTAIN

You can explore the mountain above the monastery on a web of paths leading to some of the peaks and to 13 empty and rather dilapidated hermitages. The **Funicular de Sant Joan** (one way/return €3.90/6.30; h every 20min 10am-5.40pm Apr-Oct, to 7pm mid-Jul-Aug, 11am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) will carry you

up the first 250m from the monastery. If you prefer to walk, the road past the funicular's bottom station leads to its top station in about one hour (3km).

From the Sant Joan top station, it's a 20-minute stroll (signposted) to the **Sant Joan hermitage**, with fine westward views. More exciting is the one-hour walk northwest, along a path marked with occasional blobs of yellow paint, to Montserrat's highest peak, **Sant Jeroni**, from where there's an awesome sheer drop on the northern side. The walk takes you across the upper part of the mountain, with a close-up experience of some of the weird rock pillars. Many have names: on your way to Sant Jeroni look over to the right for **La Prenyada** (The Pregnant Woman), **La Mòmia** (The Mummy), **L'Elefant** (The Elephant) and **El Cap de Mort** (The Death's Head).

Sleeping & Eating

Cel.les Abat Marcel (☎ 93 877 77 01; 2-/4-person apt €46.60/83.20; p) Here you will find comfortable apartments equipped with full bathroom and kitchenette. Smaller studios go for €31.50/38.40 for one/two people.

Hotel Abat Cisneros (☎ 93 877 77 01; s/d €51.10/88.90; a p) The only hotel in the monastery complex has modern, comfortable rooms, some looking on to Plaça de Santa Maria. It has a restaurant (meals €25-30), a cafeteria (meals €10-15) for lunch and a couple of cafés for breakfast.

Getting There & Away

BUS

A daily bus from Barcelona with **Julia Tours** (Map pp274-5; ☎ 93 317 64 54; Ronda de l'Universitat 5) to the monastery (€43) leaves at 9.30am (returning at 3pm). The price includes travel, all entry prices, use of funiculars at Montserrat and a meal at the cafeteria.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The most straightforward route from Barcelona is by **Avinguda Diagonal**, **Via Augusta**, the **Túnel de Vallvidrera** and the **C16**. Shortly after Terrassa, follow the exit signs to Montserrat, which will put you on the C58 road. Follow it northwest to the C55. Then head 2km south on this road to **Monistrol de Montserrat**, from where a road snakes 7km up the mountain. You could leave the car at the parking station in **Monistrol Vila** and take the *cremallera* up to the top.

TRAIN, CREMALLERA & CABLE CAR

The R5 line trains operated by FGC (☎ 93 205 15 15) run from Plaça d'Espanya station in Barcelona to Monistrol de Montserrat up to 18 times daily starting at 8.36am. They connect with the rack-and-pinion train, or cremallera (☎ 902 31 20 20; www.cremallerademontserrat.com; one way/return €3.80/6), which takes 17 minutes to make the upward journey. One-way/return from Barcelona to Montserrat with the FGC train and cremallera costs €8/14.40. Alternatively, you could get off the train a stop earlier at Montserrat Aeri and take the Aeri de Montserrat cable car (same price as the cremallera).

TransMontserrat tickets (€18.40) include the train, cremallera, two metro rides, the Espai Audiovisual and unlimited use of the funiculars. For €31 you can have all this with the TotMontserrat card, which also includes museum entrance and a modest dinner at the self-service restaurant. Two further ticketing options are available for those who get to the cremallera under their own steam. The Combi 1 ticket (€12) includes unlimited use of the funiculars and entrance to the Espai Audiovisual, while the Combi 2 ticket (€24.75) also includes admission to the museum and a meal at the self-service restaurant.

There are discounts for children, students and senior citizens on all the above fares.

PENEDÈS WINE COUNTRY

Some of the country's best wines come from this area. Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, a half-hour train ride west of Barcelona, is the capital of cava. Vilafranca del Penedès, 12km down the track, is the heart of the Penedès *Denominación de Origen* (DO; Denomination of Origin) region, which produces noteworthy light whites. Some reasonable reds also come out of the area. Visitors are welcomed on tours of numerous wineries; there'll often be a free glass along the way and plenty more for sale. Several companies offer package trips to Barcelona that include winery tours of the Penedès, although it is much cheaper to do it on your own. One such option for luxury lovers is the four-day all-inclusive tour run by Cellar Tours (www.cellartours.com), which costs up to €2995 per person. More accessible are 1½-day tours organised from Barcelona by Spanish Fiestas (www.spanish-fiestas.com), charging from €100 per person.

Sant Sadurní d'Anoia

pop 11,360

One hundred or so wineries around Sant Sadurní produce 140 million bottles of cava a year – something like 85% of the entire national output. Cava is made by the same method as French champagne. If you happen to be in town in October, you may catch the *Mostra de Caves i Gastronomia*, a cava- and food-tasting fest.

Freixenet (☎ 93 891 70 00; www.freixenet.com; Carrer de Joan Sala 2, Sant Sadurní d'Anoia; admission free; 1 1½hr tours 11am, noon, 1pm, 4pm & 5pm Mon–Thu, 10am, 11am, noon & 1pm Fri, 10am & 1pm weekends), the best-known cava company, is based right next to the train station.

Codorniu (☎ 93 891 33 42; www.codorniu.es; admission free; 1 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat & Sun) is at Can Codorniu in a Modernista building at the entry to the town by road from Barcelona. Manuel Raventós, head of this firm back in 1872, was the first Spaniard to be successful in producing sparkling wine by the champagne method.

You can simply turn up for tours at either of these establishments.

Vilafranca del Penedès

pop 35,860

Vilafranca is larger than Sant Sadurní and more interesting. The **tourist office** (☎ 93 818 12 54; www.turismevilafranca.com; Carrer de la Cort 14; 1 9am–1pm & 4–7pm Tue–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat & 4–7pm Mon) can provide tips on visiting some of the smaller wineries in the area.

SIGHTS

The mainly Gothic **Basilica de Santa Maria** (Plaça de Jaume I) faces the combined **Museu de Vilafranca** and **Museu del Vi** (Wine Museum; ☎ 93 890 05 82; Plaça de Jaume I; adult/7–17yr/under 6yr €3/0.90/free; 1 10am–2pm & 4–7pm Tue–Sat, 10am–2pm Sun & holidays) in the old centre of this straggling town. The museum, a fine Gothic building, covers local archaeology, art, geology and bird life, and also has an excellent section on wine. A statue on Plaça de Jaume I pays tribute to Vilafranca's famous *castellers* (Catalan human-castle builders), who do their thing during Vilafranca's lively **Festa Major** (main annual festival) at the end of August. For more on castellers, see p390.

Vilafranca's premier winery is **Torres** (☎ 93 817 74 87; www.torres.es; 1 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 9am–1pm Sun & holidays), 3km northwest of the town

centre on the BP2121 near Pacs del Penedès. The Torres family revolutionised Spanish wine-making in the 1960s by introducing new temperature-controlled, stainless-steel technology and French grape varieties.

EATING

While there is no need to stay in Vilafranca and little attraction in doing so, eating is another story altogether. **Cal Ton** (☎ 93 890 37 41; Carrer Casal 8; meals €35–40; 1 lunch & dinner Wed–Sat, lunch Sun & Tue) is one of several enticing options

in town. Hidden away down a narrow side street, Cal Ton has a crisp, modern décor and offers inventive Mediterranean cuisine – all to be washed down with local wines of course!

Getting There & Away

Up to three *rodalies* trains an hour run from Estació Sants Barcelona to Sant Sadurní (€2.40, 40 minutes) and Vilafranca (€3, 50 minutes). By car, take the AP7 and follow the exit signs.

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