Barcelona

From the ancient Principality of Catalonia to the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona has long been a vibrant city. Its unique personality finds expression in everything from the fairytale architecture of modernisme patriarch Antoni Gaudí to the neighbourhood-wide street parties and exciting food culture. We’ve ventured beyond the tourist-beaten tracks of Barri Gòtic to bring you independent retailers, old-world tapas bars, thought-provoking galleries and plenty more.

Food and drink

3 Suculent, El Raval
Soul food with style

The snout-to-tail cooking at Suculent blends Catalan soul food with a healthy dose of good presentation. The vibe is casual; people don’t come here to be seen, they come here to eat well. 43 Rambla del Raval, 08001 +34 93 443 6579 suculent.com

3 Bar Gresca, L’Antiga Esquerra de l’Eixample
Catalan comfort food

The wine list at this informal bistro boasts 400 new bottles a month, something owner and head chef Rafa Penya, his tongue firmly in cheek, attributes to being “on the right side of alcoholism”. 230 Carrer de Provença, 08001 +34 93 451 6193 bargresca.cat

3 Cometa Pla, Barri Gòtic
Natural goodness

From the intimate dining room and delicate food of restaurant Pla to the home-style tapas of Bar del Pla, Jaume Pla’s respected family of restaurants offers excellent variety. The menu here celebrates seasonal fruit and vegetables – try the onion tarte tatin. 5 Carrer del Cometa, 08002 +34 646 197 845 cometapla.cat

3 Caravelle, El Raval
Breasting coffee and beer

Care and thought are evident in every inch of this restaurant-turned-café and microbrewery, from the homemade cold brew to the milk, delivered daily from the nearby village of L’Ametlla del Vallès. Don’t miss the Moroccan-style baked eggs. 31 Carrer del Pastor Forner, 08001 +34 93 317 9892 caravelle.es

3 Mont Bar, L’Antiga Esquerra de l’Eixample
Epic wine list

This modern bistro boasts a list of more than 300 wines from myriad international regions. The vast offering provides endless pairing opportunities with chef Domenico Ungaro’s modern menu of tapas and larger plates. 220 Carrer de la Diputació, 08011 +34 93 323 9590 montbar.com

Hotels

1 Margot House, Dreta de l’Eixample
Little house on the passeig

Perhaps the city’s most surprising stopover, Margot House (pronounce the “t”) has just nine rooms. Small but comfy, it’s replete with wooden finishes.

46 Passeig de Gràcia, 08007 +34 93 272 0076 margothouse.es

2 The Serras Hotel Barcelona, Barri Gòtic
Work of art

The 1846 façade was designed by Francesc Daniel Molina. And it met with approval: Pablo Picasso lived in the building for about a year from 1896. 9 Passeig de Colom, 08002 +34 93 316 8888 hotellserrasbarcelona.com

Retail

1 Norman Vilalta, L’Antiga Esquerra de l’Eixample
Footwear with fair

From humble beginnings in the Patagonian port of Puerto Madryn, Norman Vilalta has become Barcelona’s most progressive shoemaker. The Argentinian learned his craft in Florence and channels his natural artistic air into a bespoke approach. 5 Carrer d’Enric Granados, 08007 +34 93 283 4014 normanvilalta.com

3 Kettal, Dreta de l’Eixample
Outdoor settings

A whimsical ode to the age-old textile industry of the Balearic Islands, Cortana stocks pieces imbued with founder and designer Rosa Esteva’s Mallorcan provenance. Her women’s label combines waul-like silhouettes with a sense of pared-back wonder. 290 Carrer de Provença, 08008 +34 93 487 3070 cortana.es

Vocabulary

Talking the talk

14 Adéu: Bye
21 Barri: Neighbourhood
39 Bon dia a tothom: Hello, everybody
41 Molt de gust: Pleasure to meet you
50 De res: You’re welcome
51 Moltes mercès: Thank you
53 Si us plau: Please

Need to know

Get to grips with the basics

01 Words on the street: There is a difference between the Spanish language (Castilian) and Catalan and it’s worth learning a few Catalan phrases. If you’re lucky you may even receive a smile for your efforts.

02 Take your time: Small shops typically close for lunch between 13.00 and 16.00. However, larger shops and multinational outlets stay open all day. Most retail offerings close on Sundays.

03 Party people: Catalonia celebrates three saints’ days, including that of Barcelona’s patron saint Sant Jordi (Saint George). On said day men buy women roses and women present men with a book.

04 A city to savour: When eating out remember that dinner at 22.00 or later is the norm; anything before 20.00 is sacrilege.

05 To the letter: There’s one mistake that the majority of tourists to the city make time and time again. Barça is the nickname for FC Barcelona, while Barna is the diminutive for the city. “I’m flying to Barça.” Got it?

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Go to your room

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