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FOR GAUDI'S SAKE The Spanish city with 2,500 sunshine hours a year and the 'best bar in the world'

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A FEISTY sense of civic pride grips Spain's second largest city Barcelona – and Catalans have lots to be proud of.

From rubbing shoulders with the city's movers and shakers in late-night cocktail bars, to discovering the entrepreneurial spirit drawing young, hungry upstarts from across [Europe](#), there is much to admire.



The Sagrada Família is one of the most adored buildings in Europe



Las Ramblas is the beating heart of Barcelona

We go in search of the modern and authentic [Barcelona](#) experience.

WHY SHOULD I GO?

DON'T want to choose between city sightseeing and [beach](#) break? Barcelona, which enjoys 2,500 hours of sunshine each year, offers both. Excellent beaches are within a short walk of main drag Las Ramblas.

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Start with a dip then explore the sleepy district of Barceloneta.

This atmospheric neighbourhood, on land separating the beach and port, was established in the 15th century by local fishermen.

SUN POLL Do you only visit popular locations?

Yes, it's always full of tourists

No, I like to go somewhere quiet

I love to change it up each time

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Sample the day's catch at a rustic cafe then see the rest of the city's best sights, from Gaudi architecture to the striking waterside W Hotel.

ARE THESE STREETS MADE FOR WALKING?

NOSING around town on foot is the way to go.

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Notice the subtle variations of each unique neighbourhood, from the cobbled historic centres of El Born and Barri Gotic to the modern grid system of Eixample and fashionable, up-market Gracia.

If you want a change, there's 124 miles of bike lanes and efficient metro and bus networks, the latter of which run well into the night.

ANYTHING FOR BUCKET LIST?

PERHAPS the city's most famous resident was the late, great architect Antoni Gaudi, with his incredible Sagrada Familia church the main attraction.

Pre-booking a ticket is essential. Upgrade to a tower visit for incredible city views.

But his lesser-known buildings such as Casa Mila, Casa Vicens and Casa Battlo are arguably even more remarkable. Gaudi, who died in 1926, certainly didn't lack ambition, as the remarkable Park Guell shows.

His vision to build a housing complex for Barcelona's rich and famous may have ultimately failed.

But his hard work didn't go to waste.

The area was later opened as a public park and is now recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

THE Gallery Hotel on Calle Rosselló, 249 is a good mid-range option in the upmarket Eixample district.

The stylish 4H hotel has spacious rooms with modern amenities.

Go deluxe and there's a separate living area with sofa bed, ideal for families.



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Sintonia, the signature restaurant at the Gallery Hotel is worth a visit

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You can mix a city break with a beach holiday in Barcelona

Service is friendly and efficient.

All Gaudi's must-see buildings are a short walk away, as is the shopping district of Passeig de Gracia and vibrant Las Ramblas.

In summer, you'll love the impressive roof terrace featuring swimming pool and swanky cocktail bar.

WHERE SHOULD I EAT?

WHILE there are stellar options on almost every corner, Sintonia – the signature restaurant at the Gallery Hotel – is worth a visit.

Head chef Pablo Tomás' speciality is a steak tartare – aged ribeye beef, minced and mixed in front of your eyes, with a selection of lip-smacking herbs and spices.

The chicken and veal cannelloni is another highlight.

But save room for dessert – the smoked croissant is not to be missed.

It's all washed down with a few glasses of refreshing cava sangria.

The seven-course tasting menu is from a reasonable £40.

I FANCY A DRINK

YOU'VE not experienced the real Barcelona without visiting a vermoutheria to sample this perfect aperitif.

Puigmartí (Carrer de Puigmartí, 12) is an ambient jazz bar serving up a discerning selection of local wines.

Its homemade speciality brew goes down smoothly with a few pintxos, plates of anchovies, olives and peppers on the side.

Another absolute must is Paradiso, near Franca train station.

This swanky spot was named the best bar on the planet by The World's 50 Best Bars list.

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rain no problem

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And it's not hard to see why, with excellently-crafted cocktails that look more like a work of art than a drink.

Try the On Fire!, shared between two people, and made from a concoction of bourbon, tahini, sweet potato and smoked milk.



Get lost in Barcelona's squares and plazas

GO: Barcelona

GETTING THERE: easyJet flies from Luton to Barcelona from £13.99 each way.

See [easyjet.com](https://www.easyjet.com).

STAYING THERE: A standard room at Gallery Hotel, Barcelona,

starts from €149 per night.

See [galleryhotel.com](https://www.galleryhotel.com).

OUT & ABOUT: A seven-course tasting menu at Sintonia costs from €45.

See [restaurantesintonia.com](https://www.restaurantesintonia.com). ■