

Beautiful Barcelona: A Journey to the Fantastical

No vacation to Spain is complete without a stop in iconic Barcelona, a city out of a fantasy.

Like many cities in Europe, it has a long history and has been continuously inhabited for over 2,000 years. It is the second largest city in Spain and is the capital of the community of Catalonia.

Legend has it that Barcelona was founded by Hercules while he was on his quest with Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. During the journey, one of his ships founders during a storm and the crew makes their way to safety. Hercules locates the ship and crew on a small hill. Enchanted by the beauty of the location, they are said to have founded a city with the name Barca Nona, meaning “ninth ship.”

The city was ruled by the Roman Empire and became one of the first Christian cities in Europe around 259 AD. In 711 AD, it was invaded by Moorish forces and was ruled by the Muslim empire for about 85 years. The different cultural influences and rich history formed a city that is constantly reinventing itself, is open to new and unique ways of doing things and has something for everyone.

Sights of Barcelona

Barcelona is one of the most visually interesting cities in the entire world. Because it has morphed throughout time, it has amazing architecture from a variety of periods including some of the most famous and fascinating buildings you will ever see.

History lovers will appreciate the intricate elements of romantic Roman and Medieval-era architecture of the Barri Gòtic, or Gothic Quarter, the oldest part of the city. Take your time exploring the neighborhood’s narrow roads and picturesque plazas filled with shops, outdoor cafes and nightlife. The beautiful Barcelona Cathedral is in this area, as is the palm-tree lined Plaça Reial, a great place to begin your night out.

There are a number of places in Barcelona designed by renowned architect Antoni Gaudí including the 42-acre Parc Güell, which overlooks the city. Parc Güell is adorned with Gaudí’s signature colorful mosaics including a long wavy bench with seaside views and welcome centers that look like something you would expect to see in a Dr. Seuss book or in a dream. Gaudí also designed a huge Catholic church located in the northeastern part of the city that looks like a traditional cathedral made out of cake frosting.

Tastes of Barcelona

If you are a foodie, then you will love the Boqueria Market, which offers a feast for the senses. Sample some of the market’s fresh pressed juice in nearly every color of

the rainbow, traditional manchego cheese or jamón ibérico. Make sure to come hungry!

Barcelona has traditional Spanish dishes alongside Catalan food. Since it is on the Mediterranean, fish and seafood are elements in the cuisine and Catalonians frequently mix meat and fish together in the same dish. Ham and pork are popular, as are grilled vegetables, especially eggplant and red peppers in olive oil and garlic served on bread. Finish your meal off with crema catalana, a Catalan version of crème brulee or mel i mató, goat cheese drizzled with warm honey and topped by walnuts.

Sounds of Barcelona

Barcelona is famous for its nightlife, which goes far into the wee hours of the morning (that's why an afternoon siesta is recommended). In Barcelona, you will find all kinds of music to suit any musical taste.

Catch a live local rock and roll act at Big Bang in the heart of the Raval, indulge in jazz, blues, soul, funk or Afro music at the Harlem Jazz Club in the Gothic Quarter or experience alternative music and poetry at Heliogàbal in the Gràcia district. Other venues have grunge, indie rock, hip hop, R&B, traditional Spanish guitar and nearly any other kind of music you can imagine.

If you only have time to spend a few days in Barcelona, try to do a little of everything. We promise, you will want to return again because there is always more to do and see in beautiful Barcelona.