

CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | HIP BARCELONA



instant escapes

Hip Barcelona

Spain's capital of cool is sizzling right now. Get there while it's hot

Recession be gone! From its bars to its beaches, the Catalan capital is bang on trend for summer 2015. Whether you're craning your neck in the dazzling new Design Museum, dining at the latest, greatest Mexican taquería, or weaving through a wild, wonderful, way-cool market, you'll be thrilled at how Barcelona is buzzing this season. By Tara Stevens



SEE & DO

Ignored by out-of-towners, Poble Nou is the 'hood to hit for design ideas: the broad, tree-lined boulevards are made for mooching along, taking in the handsome, 19th-century textile factories decorated with intricate relief work. You can peek inside now, too: the old buildings are re-emerging as vintage furniture stores and ateliers. Don't miss Noak Room (noakroom.com; ① on map) for Scandinavian-style mid-century Modern amid stone floors and whitewashed brick walls.

Barcelona brims with zingingly original food purveyors. The cultish Eat Street's freshly launched 'freestyle chefs community' lets you try them all (bcnmes.com/eatstreet; entry free). Like a giant travelling picnic, it's held in a different neighbourhood every month, opening at noon. Follow your nose, and the wisps of smoke, in the direction of smoky chargrilled pork ribs, fiery tacos and hot-smoked fish doused in horseradish sauce.

Also in Poble Nou, Palo Alto is the grooviest of the new alternative markets, held in the studio and gardens of the iconic graphic designer Javier Mariscal (paloaltomarket.com; £1.50; ②). Lose yourself along lush lanes of tumbling bougainvillea, listening to gipsy swing and perusing collections from the city's hippest young designers.

Barcelona's new Design Museum (museudeldisseny.cat; £4; ③) is its hottest attraction to open in some years.

WRITER'S TIP
Entry is free on Sunday afternoons from 3pm to 8pm, and on the first Sunday of each month

SECOND HELPINGS
Want to learn more about Catalan food? Foodie website culinary backstreets.com is full of reviews, and offers walking tours

House red: flats on the Rambla de Poble Nou, the city's design destination; below left, the Parc del Laberint d'Horta; Lichtenstein's Head of Barcelona

Wedged between the skyscrapers on Diagonal Mar and the shimmering cantilevered roof of the vamped-up Els Encants market, the 'floating' black cube is dazzling outside and in. Embrace the genius of the seemingly mundane — from Hoovers and fridges to poster art, corsets and nightgowns. You'll be amazed how clever design impacts every aspect of modern life.

More under-the-radar than other Gaudi sights, the Torre Bellesguard (bellesguardgaudi.com; £6.50; ④) stands on the site of a Medieval castle, which was the inspiration for its design — all swirling staircases rising through spindly turrets and walls sheathed in mosaics. Launched last year, the sensuous Gaudi Nights (summer-evening concerts) invite you to keep cool with Cava and jazz in the garden.

You needn't actually ever pay for, or set foot in, a crowded museum to soak up the local creativity. Barcelona became littered with street art in the run-up to the 1992 Olympics, when the then mayor, Pasqual Maragall, set out to humanise public spaces with 50-odd sculptures placed citywide. Highlights include Roy Lichtenstein's spotty Head of Barcelona ⑤, near the Port Vell, and Botero's giant bulbous cat ⑥, in frozen prowl on the Rambla del Raval.

Built during the Civil War (1936-1939) as an anti-aircraft battery, the Bunkers del Carmel (Turó de la Rovira 61; free; ⑦) are unknown to most locals, but discover them and you'll understand why the city got its name 'the Great Enchantress'. The roof makes a bucolic perch with uninterrupted 360° views, the skyline pierced by the stalagmite turrets of the Sagrada Família and glimmering sail-shaped skyscraper of the trendy W Hotel.

Post-party head? The loveliest park in a city not best known for green spaces is the refreshing Parc del Laberint d'Horta (Passeig dels Castanyers 1; £1.60; ⑧), towards the end of the L3 metro line. It's laid out in a series of Neo-Classical gardens, punctuated by Greek statues and Tuscan temples, and is a beautiful place to wander, with its tinkling fountains and brilliantly baffling cypress maze at its heart. >



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EAT

I Fun and foxy
NINO VIEJO (Mains about £6.50)
 Because: You simply have to eat in one of Ferran Adrià's brother's restaurants, and 2015 is mad for all things Mexican. At this taquería you can watch footie over tacos oozing hot salsa, and Margaritas with salt-scented foam. Travel's tip: Let your server choose your dishes for more intrepid nosh. Ave de Mistral 54; 00 34 933 482194, ninoviejo.es; ⑨.

I Boho bistro
MANO ROTA (Mains about £8.50)
 Because: New kids on the block Bernat Bermudo y Oswaldo Brito serve what they love — slow-braised pork cheeks with apricots, miso and mustard, say — in a redbrick bar in funky Poble Sec. Travel's tip: The set lunch is a steal at £10. Carrer de la Creu dels Molers 4; 00 34 931 648041, manorota.com; ⑩.

I Laid-back local
LANDO (Mains about £9)
 Because: It's all tall windows, concrete floors and simple, mostly organic food. The likes of taramasalata, croquettes and braised veal hit the spot every time. Travel's tip: It's great for dining alone. Just grab a spot at the counter. Passatge Pere Calders 6; 00 34 933 485530, lando.es; ⑪.

I New wave 'wow'
ROCA MOO (Mains about £22)
 Because: It's owned by the celebrated Roca brothers (of El Celler de Can Roca in Girona) — entertaining, too, as head chef Juan Pretel muddles sauces and twirls sugar before you. Travel's tip: The three-course £32 lunch (Tue-Fri) with wine and coffee is a great bargain intro. Carrer del Roselló 265; 00 34 934 454000, hotelomm.es; ⑫.

I The one to watch
SANTA RITA CLUB GASTRONOMICO (Tasting menu only; £32)
 Because: Xabi Bonilla, frustrated by fine dining, decided to open at home ('so I could cook in my slippers'). A six-course tasting menu explores local products such as Llobregat artichokes — in his lamplit apartment. Travel's tip: Make local pals over 'Dinners with Strangers' ('Cenas entre Desconocidos'). Address on booking; 00 34 676 272820, club-santarita.com.

HIGH DRINKS
 This place is part of the W Barcelona hotel. Pop up to 26th-floor Eclipse bar for one of the loftiest views over the city

LITTLE WONDER
 Nightcap? One of the finest under-the-radar bars in Barcelona, Les Gens que J'Aime (lesgensquejaime.com), is two streets south, down the staircase at Carrer de València 286. Big G&T, please!

BARS & CAFES

I Barefoot in the sand
SALT BEACH CLUB
 Because: This sexy beach club has it all: string chairs, twinkling lights and a new menu of gourmet burgers. Killer cocktails, too. Travel's tip: Don't arrive late at the weekend: it kicks off at 5pm with groovy tunes. Passeig Mare Nostrum 19-21; saltbeachclub.com; ⑬.

I Best brunch
FEDERAL CAFE DEL GOTICO
 Because: This sunny newcomer in the Barri Gòtic is the best place in town to perk up with a flat white and brunch. Travel's tip: Catch up on your reading with its UK magazines. Passatge de la Pau 11; federalcafe.es; ⑭.

I Cocktail king
BALIUS
 Because: Barcelona loves its NY-style cocktail bars (moody lighting, flirty crowd) but nobody does it like Mike Cruickshank, who mixes a perfect Martini in this refashioned ironmongers. Travel's tip: Avoid the crowds and go on a Saturday afternoon to soak up the disco grooves over a cheeky snifter. Carrer de Pujades 196; ⑮.

ASK THE LOCAL
 Rosa Solà was born and bred in Barcelona. She's a translator and the author of the Km0 Slow Food guide to Catalunya

“In summer, I love the open-air cinema at Sala Montjuïc (salamontjuic.org/en; £4.50; ⑯). It takes place in the old moat of the castle; we pack a picnic and go with our little boy. For something completely different to do when friends come to town, we like the sunset cruises with Catamarán Orsom (barcelona-orsom.com/jazz.html; £14), too. If you want to avoid the crowds at the Boqueria food market ⑰, go at 6am for breakfast and watch the stallholders setting up. 'Brunch' is really a tourist thing. Here we do vermut and tapas — Bar Seco (bar-seco.com; ⑱), Morro Fi (morrofi.cat; ⑲) and La Pubilla (Plaça de la Llibertat 23; ⑳) are all great.



STAY

I Haute hostel
CASA GRACIA (Doubles from £44, B&B)
 Because: It's cool, cheap and central, sprawling over several floors with vast communal areas, a kitchen and dining room — and a sunny terrace. Travel's tip: Gain new friends on Thursdays, when there's a big paella cook-up for all guests, or any other night of the week, over live music and pop quizzes. Passeig de Gràcia 116; 00 34 931 874497, casagraciabcn.com; ㉑.

I Secret neighbourhood retreat
HOTEL BRUMMELL (Doubles from £60, room only)
 Because: This good-looking newcomer is in up-and-coming Poble Sec, mixing a New York loft vibe with curios from Sri Lanka. There's a lovely leafy cobbled courtyard, too. Travel's tip: The rooftop pool terrace is a secret oasis for perfect summer afternoons. Carrer Nou de la Rambla 174; 00 34 931 258622, hotelbrummell.com; ㉒.

I Modernism on a budget
PRAKTIK RAMBLA (Doubles from £65, room only)
 Because: It's handsome at a bargain price, paying close attention to things that matter (power showers, black-out blinds) and mixing it with wow factor (ornately carved doors, a harlequin-pattern terrace). Travel's tip: Skip breakfast and instead wander over to Mary's Market for baked treats and stellar coffee. Rambla de Catalunya 27; 00 34 933 436690, hotelpraktikrambla.com; ㉓.

I Sumptuous idling
COTTON HOUSE HOTEL (Doubles from £129, room only)
 Because: These palatial digs were once home to Barcelona's Cotton Foundation — note the high-count cotton sheets and the cotton blooms inset in marble in the floors. Modernist details have been perked up by comfy lounges, making this an ideal spot for a lazy weekend. Travel's tip: It's not the most ostentatious, but the Cotton Room is one of just two rooms with its own terrace. Gran Vía de



les Corts Catalanes 670; 00 34 934 505045, hotelcottonhouse.com; ㉔.

I Fashionable portside paradise
THE SERRAS (Doubles from £130, room only)
 Because: Nowhere in town boasts views quite like those from the rooftop at the Serras, on the site of Picasso's first studio. Glimpse the newly fashionable Port Vell and the fuzzy green hills of Montjuïc. Travel's tip: Hang out at the mezzanine library — the bar serves the best Martini in town. Passeig de Colom 9; 00 34 931 691868, hoteltheserrasbarcelona.com; ㉕.

WORTH BOOKING
 Even if you're not staying, an extravagantly long lunch here at Michelin-starred Marc Gascons' mod-Med restaurant is a very BCN experience, tapas and all

Curl power: clockwise from top left, spiral staircase at Cotton House Hotel; Casa Gràcia hums nightly with live music; view from the penthouse at the Mandarin Oriental; simple ingredients made simply delicious at Lando; shaking it up at Balius

open to the public, serving impeccable ceviche, sushi and seafood. Passeig de Gràcia 38-40; 00 34 931 518888, mandarinoriental.com/barcelona; ㉖.

GET ME THERE

GO INDEPENDENT
 Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies to Barcelona from Dublin and seven UK airports including Stansted, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester, from £25 one way. EasyJet (easyjet.com) flies from Belfast, Bristol, Liverpool, Gatwick, Luton, Southend and Newcastle, from £25 one way.

GO PACKAGED
 A two-night food-focused holiday with Made for Spain (00 34 914 487275, madeforspain.com) costs from £360pp, including walking tour and four-star hotel but not flights. Cresta (0844 800 7020, thomascok.com) has two nights at a three-star, from £115pp, B&B, with Gatwick flights.

FURTHER INFORMATION
 Visit the Spanish tourism site spain.info.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, GETTY, KATE HOCKENHULL, MAP: MAIDENHEAD CARTOGRAPHIC