

Where to Stay



Area & Hotel Guide

Feel like living life in the dark ages? Got a penchant for the seedier side? Perhaps you're only in Barcelona for Gaudi? Barcelona is a big place, with many places to stay. The following areas though have their own special kind of attraction.

CAMP NOU

GAUDI

LA RAMBLA

TIBIDABO AMUSEMENT PARK

WHERE TO STAY

For history... Barrio Gótic

Filthy peasants, corsets and cleavage, dandies in lacy attire...wandering the medieval labyrinth of Barrio Gótic pleases the eye and floods the imagination. A concentration of medieval architecture, with buildings mainly from the fourteenth and fifteenth century, Barrio Gótic is an un-spoilt remnant of Barcelona's long lost past: Narrow winding passages, from which stone spiral stairways might lead to a bubbling apothecary's basement; divine light shining through biblical stained glass in a vaulted Gothic Cathedral... experience after experience of old-world charm. Be sure to explore the remains of the original roman city, Barcino, in Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat and cafe alfresco-it in Plaça del Rei: a perfect blend of palm trees, porticos and medieval architecture.

Our picks: For a true appreciation of Plaça del Rei, pay to stay at **DO Plaça Reial** (*luxury*). Cleverly combining traditional and contemporary design, with a colour palate of black, cream and timber, it has a rooftop pool and spa, and a restaurant terrace overlooking the plaza. For simplicity, cleanliness and taste, however, staying at **Hostal Fernando** (*budget to mid-range*) is perfect for the cash-conscious traveler. In the heart of Barrio Gótic, its pleasant, yet basic, private rooms come with a TV and bathroom. Dormitories have bathrooms also.

For film noir grit... El Raval

Shifty characters dwelling in dark corners and come hither stares from nightwalkers in narrow laneways were once the standard in El Raval. But despite its seedy past, the barrio has been cleaned-up significantly in the last few decades, and is now increasingly the home of the young, moneyed and artistically inclined. A historic, compact, warren of a place with a now palatable gritty edge, staying in El Raval affords easy access to the barrio's numerous art studios, galleries, trendy bookshops, retro clothing stores, great cafes, multicultural restaurants and historic bars – check out classic smoky boozers, like **Bar Marsella** and **London Bar**, that have been frequented by artists, criminals and femme fatales for centuries.

Our picks: Juxtapose El Raval's grit with the sci-fi luxury and style of **Barcelo Raval** (*luxury*). A futuristic, elliptic edifice with light-filled rooms, graceful design features, and service that leaves nothing to chance. A roof terrace, with pool and gym, offers panoramic views of the city. No frills **Residencia d'Investigadors** (*budget to mid-range*), on the other hand, gets the job done with comfortable spacious rooms, a plain but painless design, and well-organised, friendly staff – great value for money.

For Gaudi and Gay Barcelona... Eixample

Barcelona's main shopping and business district, Eixample is the place to stay for Modernista architecture, Gaudi in particular, and/or colourful gay community, clubs, and bars. The area took shape with the fall of the old city's walls in the late 19th century, as luck would have it, around about the time the *Modernista* movement was starting to roll. Most stuff to be seen is between parallel thoroughfares, Passeig de Gràcia and Rambla de Catalunya, like Gaudi's Casa Mila and Casa Batllo – Sagrada Familiar is a few blocks east. A little west, on a grid of streets between Carrer de Balmaes and Carrer de Tarragona, rainbow flags hang from windows and numerous food, fun and frivolity businesses cater to a dynamic gay community and 150 thousand gay travelers each year.

Our picks: Gay and hetero-friendly **Hotel Axel** (*luxury*) in the heart of the Gaixample, is a stylish boutique hotel for the moneyed modern traveller. Expect cleanliness, comfort and top-notch service and a rooftop with hot tubs and cocktail bar. That said, its pricing is a little over-the-top. The effortlessly cool **Europark** (*luxury*), a style-homage to black and white stripes and tiles, has a little more bang-for-your-buck. Equidistant to the Sagrada Familiar and the Gaudi offerings on Passeig de Gràcia, pricing is reasonable, service is with a smile and the rooftop pool-deck is a winner.

For nightlife and vitality... Gracia

Hip, liberal and bohemian with an upbeat nightlife, Gracia is at its best on Carrer Verdi, a happening strip of wine bars, tapas joints, night clubs and local designer fashion. Check out Barcelona's sights, return to your hotel, pop out for an art-house movie at groovy independent cinema, Cine Verdi, then wax-lyrical in one of the cool surrounding bars. Gaudi's beguiling Park Guell is only a short up-hill stroll away, while not far from Carrer de Verdi, in the shadow of Sant Joan Church, leafy and pretty Plaça de la Virreina is great place to sip 'n' sup in the morning. To experience the full force of Gracia's charm, however, visit in mid-August for the riotous Gracia Festival, a weeklong celebration of culture, community and art.

Our picks: Budget travellers will appreciate the frugal taste of **Residència Erasmus** (*budget*). Perfectly located for the offerings of Carrer Verdi, expect affordable accommodation, helpful staff, free internet connection and effortless, inexpensive style. Perfect for couples, families and groups of four-to-six **Bonavista Apartments Barcelona – Virreina** (*mid-range*) offer an affordable and chic home away from home: open plan kitchen, dining and lounge areas and cosy rooms with deliriously comfortable beds, wrapped-up in a tasteful package.

Getting Around

Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (www.tmb.cat) runs an efficient Metro system and network of bus routes throughout the city that will get you to all attractions with ease. Trains stop running at midnight, 2am on Friday nights, starting up again at 5am and running for 24 hours on Saturdays. Buses run from 5am or 6am till 10pm or 11pm. Outside of these times there are plenty of taxis about.

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