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Gaudi

Gaudi's Barcelona is truly a wonder of the world.



An architectural genius has deeply etched his mark on Barcelona.

A building designed by Antoni Gaudi is immediately recognisable: strange amorphous surfaces, skeletal joinery and a gamut of truly bizarre, though undeniably pleasing forms. A genius of the 20th century, experiencing the works of Gaudi in Barcelona is a must.

Gaudi was the undisputed master of *Modernisme*, the cultural movement seeking to define Catalan identity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Reacting to the stylistic impact of the Industrial Revolution, the movement, among other things, revisited its cultural roots, aligned with the lyricism and subjectivity of romanticism, and married architecture with art.

Moorish, Doric, Baroque and particularly Gothic architecture, which he both celebrated and rejected, all had a profound influence on Gaudi; but nature, in all its multifarious manifestations, was his biggest, most influential teacher. With a *Modernisme* philosophy celebrating subjectivity and self-expression, Gaudi's love of organic forms led him to study nature in detail. For him, in terms of practicalities and aesthetic affect, nothing beat the trunk of a tree or the refinement of the human skeleton.



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As a result, to the satisfaction of the minds, bodies and souls of those who visit his creations, geometric forms like the hyperbolic paraboloid, the hyperboloid, the helicoid and cone, fractals and the pleasing aesthetic qualities of the catenary curve all feature. Though always a mathematically adept, his study of nature gave Gaudi a superior command of geometry, enabling his outlandish imagination and subsequent creations to take shape in simple and practical ways.

And all of this wonderment can be experienced in Barcelona.

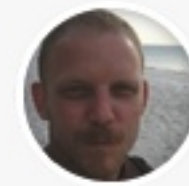
On a hill in the northwest, overlooking the city is Park Güell, a perfect place to start. Sloping, twisted columns on a curving colonnaded footpath, fairytale gatehouses inspired by Hansel and Gretel, a mosaic lizard sculpture and more... Park Güell is a joy to behold.

Follow this up with the globally recognised basilica, Sagrada Família. Still incomplete, this masterpiece of the imagination was conceived as a forest of trunks and interweaving branches.

Then head to apartment building Casa Mila in Eixample, where among the many fabulous curves and details to discover, the attic houses an exposition of Gaudi's work. Of possible interest is a hanging chain model from which his ingenious catenary curve arches were devised; their self-cancelling tangential forces rendering support beams obsolete.

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Ben Connor

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Ben has travelled extensively through the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia. His features and reviews have appeared in publications and websites in the UK and Australia, including Rough Guides (Penguin Group, London, UK), The List (Edinburgh, Scotland), Tiger Beer's UK website, Australian Traveller, OUTthere and Cruise Passenger.

