

CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | FOODIE BARCELONA

SEE & DO

● Cava is the lifeblood of Catalonia. Learn your *brut nature* from your *semiseco* with a **tutored tasting led by a local sommelier**, who begins with a history-lesson meander through the Roman ruins and cafe-lined squares of the Gothic Quarter (foodieandtours.com; £52pp for two hours). Your Cava education kicks off at Zona d'Ombra (zonadombra.es; ① on map), a blink-and-you'll-miss-it bar among the tangle of medieval streets.

● Park Güell, Gaudí's garden in the village-like Gràcia district, is a **feast of gleaming ceramics and exotic plant life** (parkguell.cat; £6; ②). It's popular, so escape the afternoon crowds with a picnic in the lush (free) park outskirts. Buy *bocadillos* (sandwiches) near the west entrance at Guelly Sandwichpark (Ave Coll del Portell 77; sandwich and drink £4; ③), where customers are invited to leave their mark on the in-shop graffiti wall.

● Barcelona is wonderfully walkable, but you'll cover more ground on two wheels. Steel Donkey Bike Tours tailors its city jaunts to your tastes. You might find yourself **supping vermouth in a rowdy, sailor-like tavern in the revitalised Raval neighbourhood**, or gorging on Manchego cheese in an old butter factory hidden away in the Gothic Quarter (steeldonkeybiketours.com; from £30pp for four hours).

● The national dish, paella, has become a victim of its own success,

Square meals: cafe tables on Plaça Reial in the Gothic Quarter; below left, Bogatell beach; Spanish hams in La Boqueria market

WRITER'S TIP

The tutored tasting comes with dessert, but for a more substantial soaking-up, add a tapas pairing (£20pp extra)

MOVEABLE FEAST

For more international flavours (Colombian coffee, Taiwanese bao buns), find the cultish Eat Street stalls (bcnmes.com/eatstreet), in a different location each month

and too many places get away with serving flavourless gloop in its place. Paella preservationist Marta Amb Tu Cuinem is righting these wrongs with a cooking class at her apartment, overlooking Plaza Tetuan (ambtu.cuinem@gmail.com; £28pp; ④). **Get to grips with glittering cuttlefish and plump Montserrat tomatoes** before sharing the delicious spoils over wine.

● The Museu Picasso (museupicasso.bcn.cat; £9.50; ⑤) is El Born district's big draw, but you'll see old Barcelona at its romantic best in the surrounding cobbled streets. So **swap still life for real life on tree-lined Passeig del Born** — its benches are perfect for people-watching. Once a site of medieval jousting competitions, it's now flush with natty bars and cafes. Come late for Rioja and tapas at El Born Bar (Passeig del Born 26; elbornbar.com; ⑥).

● Even fast-moving food scenes need their stalwarts, and Barcelona's is La Boqueria ⑦, the market spilling out beyond its stained-glass facade onto touristy La Rambla. **Hawkers holler from behind sky-high tutti frutti displays**, but you really want the seafood bars further in, for lobster-sized langoustines and razor clams smothered in garlic butter.

● Barcelona does city-beach life brilliantly. But don't flop with the tourists at Barceloneta ⑧, the first beach beyond the centre. **Follow the locals further up the sands to wider, cleaner Bogatell beach ⑨**, lined with *chiringuito* bars serving sangria by the jug. The best food is at Xiringuito Escriba (Ave del Litoral 62; 00 34 932 210729; xiringuitoescriba.com; mains about £18; ⑩) — try the *fideuà*, a warm slurry of seafood and noodles.

● You won't want to miss the multi-spired mastery of Gaudí's still-unfinished Sagrada Família basilica ⑪. But dodge the queues and arrive early — book the 9am slot online (sagradafamilia.org; £13), then relax at the unassuming Xurreria Sagrada Família, a family affair that's been serving up **churros (deep-fried doughnutty strips) for almost 70 years** (Plaça de la Sagrada Família 26; xurreriasagradafamilia.es; about £2 per portion; ⑫). >



instant escapes

Foodie Barcelona

Give your tastebuds a wild trip. (Warning: may contain exploding olives)

Think the Catalan capital is just about the *tapas*? Barcelona begs to differ. From brilliant bar bites to Michelin stars and medieval food markets, the food scene sizzles. Whether you're Gaudí-gazing or beach-lazing, you're never far from a flavoursome fix and a crisp glass of Cava. Just be prepared to loosen your belt a notch or two... **By Emma Broomfield**



CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | FOODIE BARCELONA

EAT
● Tapas institution

CAL PEP (Dishes about £7)
Because: The queue snaking out of the door is a giveaway. Here are moreish tapas at their very best (the hit London restaurant Barrafina is modelled on this place). Order the *trifasic*, a crispy mixture of squid, whitebait and prawns. **Travel's tip:** Don't let them seat you in the dining room out back — the bar is much more fun. *Plaça de les Olles 8; 00 34 933 107961, calpep.com; @*

● **Innovative newcomer**
VIANA (Mains about £14)
Because: In popular Plaça Reial, this newbie puts its own twist on classics — the *patatas bravas* are made with sweet potato and edible flowers. **Travel's tip:** Do pre-dinner drinks elsewhere — the bar here is tiny. *Carrer del Vidre 7; 00 34 934 638295, vianabcn.com; @*

● **Hip hang-out**
ACCES (Mains about £15)
Because: If you look beyond the blingy decor, you'll find a delicate menu with *ceviche* as the star. **Travel's tip:** Eat late and you'll emerge to find the lobby transformed into a lively lounge (often with live DJ) that's the rival of any nightclub in this artsy-liberal Eixample Esquerra neighbourhood. *Aribau 55; 00 34 930 077839, acces-bcn.com; @*

● **Sunday steaks**
ARCANO (Mains about £20)
Because: This Argentinian-run cellar is a devil to find, but it's worth it. Steaks are A-grade, and the subtler, pistachio-spiked tuna tartare is a winner. **Travel's tip:** Arcano is the exception to the rule that Barcelona's best restaurants close on Sunday, but book well ahead. *Carrer dels Mercaders 10; 00 34 932 956467, arcanobcn.com; @*

● **The Michelin-starred marvel**
DISFRUTAR (20-course tasting menus from £90)
Because: Nothing is as it seems at Disfrutar, chef'd by El Bulli alumni. Mind-bending highlights include exploding olives, chocolate peppers and beetroot meringues that grow before your eyes. **Travel's tip:** Ask for table 45, for culinary wizardry on one side, and the glam terrace on the other. *Carrer de Villarroel 163; 00 34 933 486896, en.disfrutarbarcelona.com; @*

WRITER'S TIP
You can get your savoury fix at next-door sister tapas joint, Bubó Bar. The Brie and coconut croquettes sound odd, but really hit the spot.

ON A BUDGET?
The generous set lunch (three courses) costs just £12.70, with a handful of tasty daily specials.

DRINK & SHOP
● Martini master

DRY MARTINI
Because: This 40-year-old bar whisks you back to a bygone era, with its leather sofa, tuxedo'd waiters and more than 100 variations on the classic cocktail. **Travel's tip:** To soak up the booze, book a table at Speakeasy, behind a hidden door at the back of the bar. *Carrer d'Aribau 162; drymartiniorg.com; @*

● **Designer desserts**
BUBO
Because: Chef Carles Mampel is the Gaudí of the pudding world, creating sugary works of art that are too good to eat (almost). **Travel's tip:** The star is the Xabina: olive oil and cappuccino sponge, with praline and a chocolate glaze. *Carrer de les Caputxes 10; bubo.es; @*

● **Candy-store cocktails**
LA CONFITERIA
Because: Gin bottles have replaced jars of *bonbons* in this former sweet shop. Try the Alice in Wonderland, a zinging gin, raspberry, rose and lychee cocktail served in a teacup. **Travel's tip:** Sundays are more relaxed, with laid-back live music. *Carrer de Sant Pau 128; @*

ASK THE LOCAL
Barcelona-based sommelier Mireia Pascual has worked at many top restaurants in Catalonia, including El Bulli

“The Barceló Raval hotel (Rambla del Raval 17; barcelo.com; @) does a lovely brunch on Sundays, with a live DJ. For £22, you can fill up on pastries, cheeses and cold cuts, then head to the roof terrace with a Mimosa to take in the view. Vermouth bars are the cool choice for afternoon drinks. Ask for the house vermouth, served with soda and lemon, and tasty *montaditos* (snack rolls) at Quimet & Quimet (Carrer del Poeta Cabanyes 25; @). Save room for a Catalan flatbread filled with caramelised cream from family bakery Forn Vilamala (Carrer Agullers 14; @). They sell out fast, but fresh batches are cooked throughout the day, and are worth the wait.



STAY
● **Theatrical bargain**
TEATRO HOSTEL (Single dorm beds from £13, room only)
Because: Budget accommodation rarely has such razzmatazz — its name in lights on the facade, velvet chairs and antique theatre props inside. Just don't expect many frills in the dorm rooms. **Travel's tip:** At night, the sociable staff are known to cook family-style for all the guests in return for a donation. *Carrer d'Albareda 12; 00 34 934 439466, teatrohostel.com; @*

● **The eco-friendly one**
HOSTAL GRAU (Doubles from £70, room only)
Because: At Eddy and Monica's homely guesthouse, rooms marry reclaimed wood with organic bed linen, while days end with complimentary wine and cakes. **Travel's tip:** Book the new Off Room — it's designed to minimise exposure to electromagnetic fields (even the paint repels radiation), to help you sleep better. *Calle Ramelletes 27; 00 34 933 018135, hostalgrau.com; @*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, AWL IMAGES, GETTY. MAP: MAIDENHEAD CARTOGRAPHIC

● **Breakfast champion**
HOTEL PRAKTIK BAKERY (Doubles from £71, B&B)
Because: You'll wake to the smell of fresh bread wafting up to your modern-minimalist room from the ground-floor bakery and wish the generous buffet breakfast could last all day. **Travel's tip:** Light sleeper? Request a courtyard-facing room to avoid a rude awakening from nearby construction sites. *Calle Provença 279; 00 34 9 348 80061, hotelpraktikbakery.com; @*

● **Modernist masterpiece**
HOTEL ESPANA (Doubles from £104, room only)
Because: Alabaster fireplaces, mermaid mosaics and multi-storey lights representing Cava bubbles make the taupe-and-grey bedrooms seem relatively staid. **Travel's tip:** The breakfast isn't worth the extra £15. Instead, cross La Rambla to Artisa (artisa.es), a simple cafe doing coffee and a homemade *croissant* for £2. *Sant Pau 9-11; 00 34 935 500000, hotelespanya.com; @*

SUITE SMELL
The hotel's heavenly fragrance (by Atelier Cologne) costs £110 (100ml) at the spa. But free mini-versions are left nightly at turndown.

Sweet dreams: clockwise from top left, Bubó patisserie; decadent bathing at the Serras hotel; Majestic Hotel's rooftop pool terrace; in the kitchen at Cal Pep; chocolate peppers at the Michelin-starred Disfrutar

● **The grande dame**
MAJESTIC HOTEL & SPA (Doubles from £213, room only)
Because: Despite its size (271 rooms, including 44 suites), this 99-year-old stalwart fits right in with its designer-boutique neighbours (Chanel, Bulgari, Gucci) on Passeig de Gràcia, the city's Champs-Élysées. **Travel's tip:** The dessert table and free-flowing bubbly just about justify the £32 price tag for breakfast — and it'll see you through to mid-afternoon. *Passeig de Gràcia 68; 00 34 934 881717, hotelmajestic.es; @*

● **The one with the views**
THE SERRAS (Doubles from £257, B&B)
Because: This waterside retreat (where Picasso had his studio) makes luxury look effortless, with a Michelin-pedigree chef in the kitchen and Elizabeth II's choice of mattress in the rooms. **Travel's tip:** Head to the rooftop terrace at sunset for cocktails and unrivalled views of the horizon, beyond the yachts pulling into swanky Port Vell marina. *Passeig de Colom 9; 00 34 931691868, hoteltleserrasbarcelona.com; @*

GET ME THERE
GO INDEPENDENT
Jet2 (jet2.com) flies from Manchester, Glasgow and Leeds Bradford, from £44 one way. Ryanair (ryanair.com) flies from Stansted from £20 one way. Or try EasyJet (easyjet.com), which flies from seven UK airports, from £38 one way.

GO PACKAGED
Kirker Holidays (020 7593 2283, kirkerholidays.com) has three nights at the Majestic Hotel from £876pp, B&B, with flights, transfers and entry to the Sagrada Família. Thomas Cook (0843 506 8870, thomascook.com) has three nights at a four-star hotel, from £196pp, room only, with flights and transfers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
See barcelonaturisme.com. Its three-day Barcelona Card (£39) covers free public transport in Zone 1 (including the airport), free entry to 25 top sites, plus discounts in restaurants, bars and shops. Or buy the T10 travel card from any Metro station (£8.50 a day for unlimited Zone 1 travel). ■

