

BARCELONA

The Soul of Architecture & Vibrancy



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“With her enchanting songs, her rare beauty, and clever tricks, this wild 'wanderess' ensnared my soul like a gypsy-thief, and led me foolish and blind to where you find me now. The first time I saw her, fires were alight. It was a spicy night in Barcelona. The air was fragrant and free.”

Roman Payne, *The Wanderess*



Intro

Most cities were built on legends; Barcelona was built on architecture. Planning, designing and construction made it tightly and inextricably intertwined with passion, care and diligence. And there's nothing unearthly about it, however impossible it may seem. In Barna, architecture is spelled with a capital a. It surpassed art long ago, and became a reflection of all that's deeply human. Through architecture, Barcelonans tell their tales of history and politics, society and heart. And what tales they are.

If there was a legend surrounding the Catalan capital city, it would be one of gunpowder and sprouts. Still, its wars and revolutions haven't destroyed, but built. And although urbanism came late here, it never wiped the old days out. The old and the new fused in the magnificent now, which remains eternal. Now, you won't need a history lesson to feast your senses. But, like all fine stories do, this one has its beginning. And it's spectacular.

In 1992, Freddie Mercury was gone for less than a year, peacefully dreaming his operatic dream and singing his baritone Barcelona to infinity. The same year, his dream came to life, announcing what will become the second Catalan Renaixença. For centuries before, Catalans fought for their right to remain traditional; it's an irony that their fight wasn't recognized until it was finally caught by the eye of a camera. It took one Olympic Games and a billion reporters to discover the best hidden architectural gem of Europe. The technology unearthed the tradition, and returned to it the glory it deserved. During the 60's, when seafarers repeated history and stumbled upon the Spanish shores for the second time, Barcelona stayed disregarded. Over there, the ground was shaking, unearthing the new wave, simultaneously covering it with a thick wall of dust. Understated by its citizens and unrecognized by the foreigners, the Catalan Art Nouveau never reached the strangers' ships. Until 1992, we were oblivious of Barcelona, as we were of London, Vienna, or Berlin, continuously praising New York and Paris instead. But we're not entirely to blame. For centuries, Barcelona was deliberately silent, producing only a handful of greats, and keeping them out of our sight. Even today, when we sigh to the mention of one Gaudí, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro or Pablo Picasso, we know little of what lies behind them. Catalonia remains a privilege of dreamers and travellers. For the rest, it is a fairy land, distant and unknown.

So, what have we missed? Which names and splendour? Who are those who created the stories, crafted the buildings, curved the stones? Walk out into the bright Barcelona day, and buy a postcard to send back home. Here's what should have been written on the back.

Barcelona's origins can be traced back to the times of Hannibal, and even further, Hercules. Those are intricate myths, but they speak little of Catalan spirit. And although the Romans, Christians and Visigoths left their mark as well, nothing shaped Barcelona as modern day revolutions did. It wasn't until the bombing dust had settled that the city began to sprout. People came, buildings rose. At the eve of the 20th century, Barna was urban and alive. This is the story of its blossoms.



Casa Vicens

Hidden and dreamy, Casa Vicens, recognized by the Ayuntamiento (Barcelona City Council) as the most emblematic building in the city back in 1927, is a lyrical masterpiece, humming softly and invitingly. As Gaudí's first significant work in Barna, the residence speaks of the artist's poetics. The tiles and the floral patterns! The red bricks, with all of their organic roughness! It emerges lonely in the middle of the Gràcia district, which was, at the time of the original construction, a village separated from the city. Now, it stands surrounded by tall, woolly buildings, alone and charming, like a precious Moorish stone.



Picture 1 The floral tiles on Casa Vicens' façade

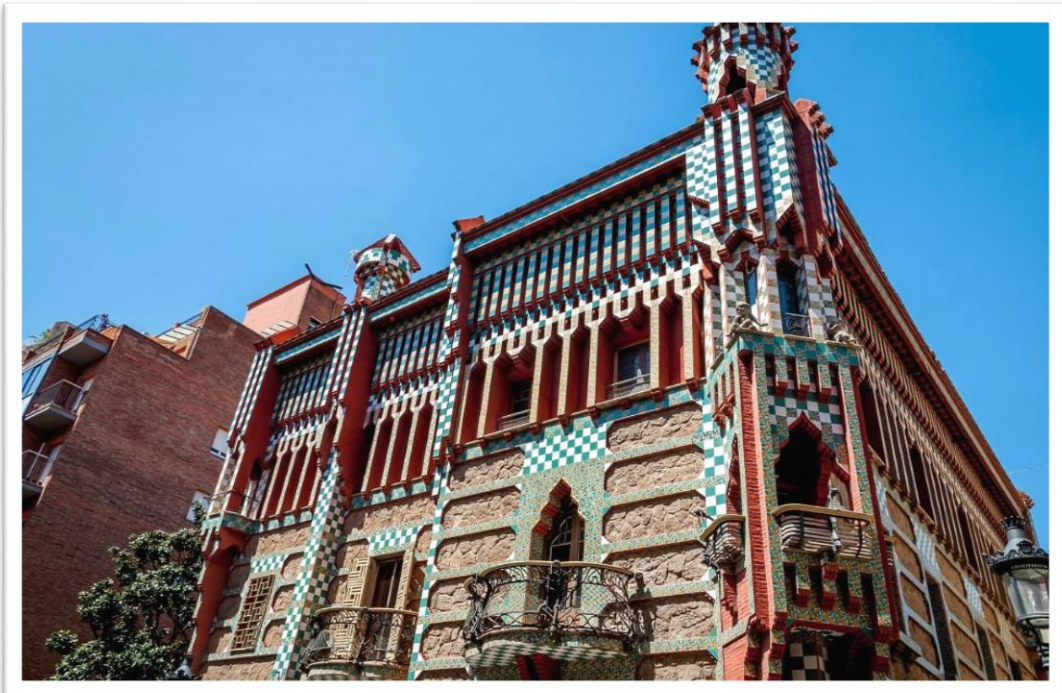
Architecturally speaking, being the first important work of Gaudí's career, Casa Vicens announces his introductory artistic phase, the one that came after the graduation and first collaborations. The phase was later marked as the Orientalist period, during which Gaudí experimented with exotic influences. Inspiration came from afar, spreading out its Eastern flavours, vivid and fragrant. With a touch of Islamic-Hispanic art and plenty of Moorish influence, the taste that will later on become quintessentially Gaudí was born here, in 24 Carrer de Les Carolines.

The construction began in 1883, and was commissioned by Manuel Vicens i

Montaner, a stockbroker; years later, the legend would transform him into a manufacturer of bricks and tiles, and set him off to glory. The choice of motifs wasn't accidental, since Casa Vicens owes its picturesque fashion to these exact elements. So, the facade, burning red bricks alternated with Moorish tiles, and the flowery checkerboard. Nature was Gaudí's first everlasting love; in his mind, rushes and reeds made the sweetest of music, swaying on to form his geometric forms, gentle and lulling. It wasn't Gaudí who created his work, but tree trunks and human skeletons. On the site of once narrow Carrer de Les Carolines, the artist found yellow flowers, and planted them deep into his philosophy. Now, they bloom on the façade, fair and wild. Catalonia twirls within. However, a collage of bricks and ceramics on the polychromatic façade is not where the Casa's exterior ends. The building technique is Islamic, and showcases the extensive use of projecting brick brackets and wall divisions. Overlooking the road is the corner tower with an overhanging projection. Insensible, a gallery dangles at the top, masked with wooden latticework.

On the outside, a rubble wall and a fence protect the Vicens' family dream. The theme is, once again, floral, with a dwarf-palm-inspired foliated pattern on the iron strip. Within the property, Gaudí designed three gardens, as a reply to the commissioner's wishes for a bright and close-to-nature home. To honour the Mediterranean, he enriched it with palms and fruit trees. With those, Casa smells like Catalan summer, sweet as poached pears.





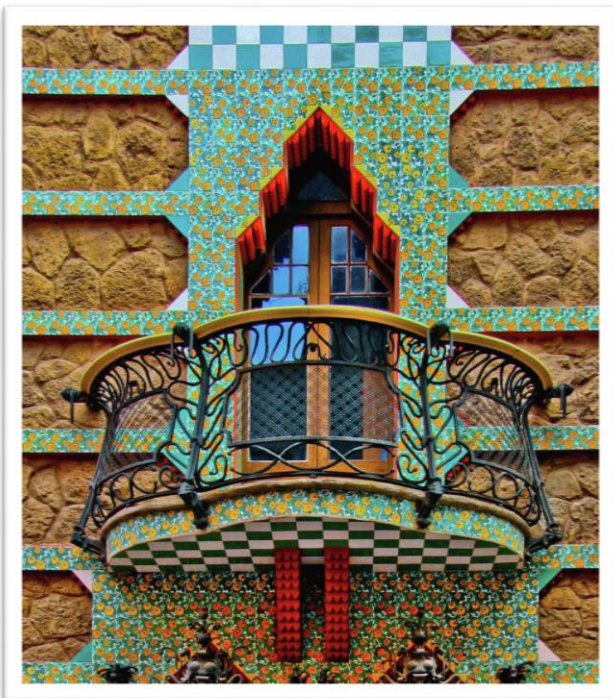
Picture 2 The Casa's polychromatic façade with a touch of Moorish influence

trees and cherry branches, separated with woode beams. Above the sitting room, birds hum under the clear blue sky.

Gaudí's magic is in the details. On the inside, the magic swirls from a ceiling, descending slowly all the way down, pouring out over the furniture, making it golden and rose. On the ground floor, a dining room welcomes the Spanish South; once, the smell of morning berries and cream lingered on its veranda. In the smoking lounge, Muslim muqarnas and golden leaves. At night, vegetation pullulates in the bedroom, reaching out to its roots, all the way to the river Cassoles and its banks. An ivy climbs to the ceiling to pleach there with strawberry

Since 1899, the house was under the ownership of the Jover family; in 2005, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The current owner is working on the latest restoration of the site, and by 2016, Casa Vicens will be transformed into a museum, and open to public. "The mission of Casa Vicens as a house museum is to present the first Gaudí house, presenting it as an essential work to understand his unique architectural language and the development of Art Nouveau in Barcelona," explained the head of the project.

So, visit it in 2016. Let it be July, for that's when Barcelona beams. Wear a floral babydoll dress, or take a girl who's wearing one. Disobey the rules, pick an orange, touch the tiles. A century will flee in a split second, leaving a vague trace of something nectarous. Smile, and Casa Vicens will tell you a story.



Picture 3 One of Casa Vicens' balconies, embellished with floral and chekboard tiles



Casa Milà

Provocative and curvaceous, Gaudí's last finished work is a phantasmagorical miracle. In the core of its structure, the artist's beloved nature flows unstoppably, only to infuse back to its fount. With undulating stone, The Quarry voices the language of earth's elements. Biomimicry, someone would say. And indeed – Casa Milà is a world wonder, constructed of pure, organic geometry, Gaudí's second lady.



Picture 4 Picture 4 Gaudí's Casa Milà, seen from the street

Constructed in 1912 and commissioned in 1905, popularly named La Pedrera, the building had a tangly history. The man behind the project, and the one that hired the famous architect, was of Barcelona's most flamboyant upper crust, with a nose for wealthy widows and opulence. With money, came fame bigger than he'd ever expected, and his name, Pere Milà i Camps, was curved into modern history for days to come. Since then, the building sustained major property changes and even greater efforts to keep it unique and coherent. Casa Milà is now the imperishable symbol of Catalan Modernista movement; as for Gaudí, the building mystified the architect's sweat, becoming the tour-de-force of his creative achievements. And

its magnificent. It's challenging, it's

synesthetic, bizarre, otherworldly and inexplicable; unfathomable for a work of architecture, Casa Milà is cathartic.

Now, La Pedrera stands on the corner of Carrer de Provença and Passeig de Gràcia, where it shines like the oddest of gemstones. From the very start, Gaudí's building was constructed in 9 levels – 6 floors, including the ground floor, intended for a garage, and a main floor, where the Milà family lived, with basement, mezzanine and the attic. It's rather curious that the architect was extremely devoted to his Catholic roots, which is why the original plan included religious elements, such as statues of the Virgin Mary and two archangels, St. Gabriel and St. Michael. Gaudí envisioned La Pedrera as a spiritual symbol, and had many difficulties once the owners rejected the idea; in fact, he considered leaving the project until his priest convinced him to proceed. Nevertheless, Casa Milà stays the finest example of how Gaudí experienced architecture; as a multifunctional design, the building is an undisputable artwork, inhabited by people; such a construction is astonishing in its aesthetics, but bright, cozy and livable. That's why Gaudí's designs sing – delusive in their appearance, they remain subtle in their lyricism. For

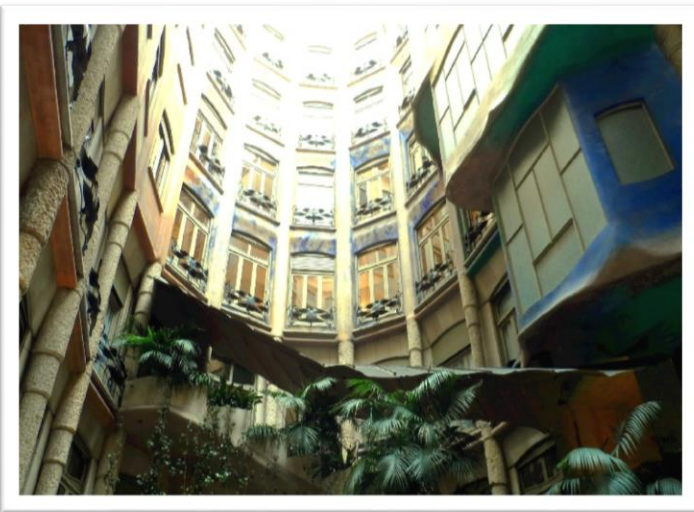


instance, in order to keep its tenants close and familiar, the architect allowed just one lift every second floor! And even now, Casa' million dollar inhabitants are compelled to say "Good morning" to their neighbors. Delicate and brilliant.



Picture 5 La Pedrera's roof terrace

and everything surreal, every little element made into a dreamlike, anthropomorphic sculpture, covered with broken marble and glass, glistening under the Catalan sun.



Picture 6 The interior courtyard of Casa Milà

But that's only the beginning of La Pedrera's splendence. Imagined as a continuous curve, the building doesn't seem to stop. It doesn't even look like a construction, but rather like a rock molded into a venue suitable for living. The innovations in structure are numerous and eccentric. For starters, the façade made of limestone blocks is supported by steel beams, so it basically has no load-bearing function. Perceived from an aerial view, the entire building is shaped like an asymmetrical figure eight, thanks to another unconventional solution – interior courtyards. But there isn't anything like the Casa Milà's roof. For romantics – skylights and chimneys; for lovers – the emergency stairs and fans;

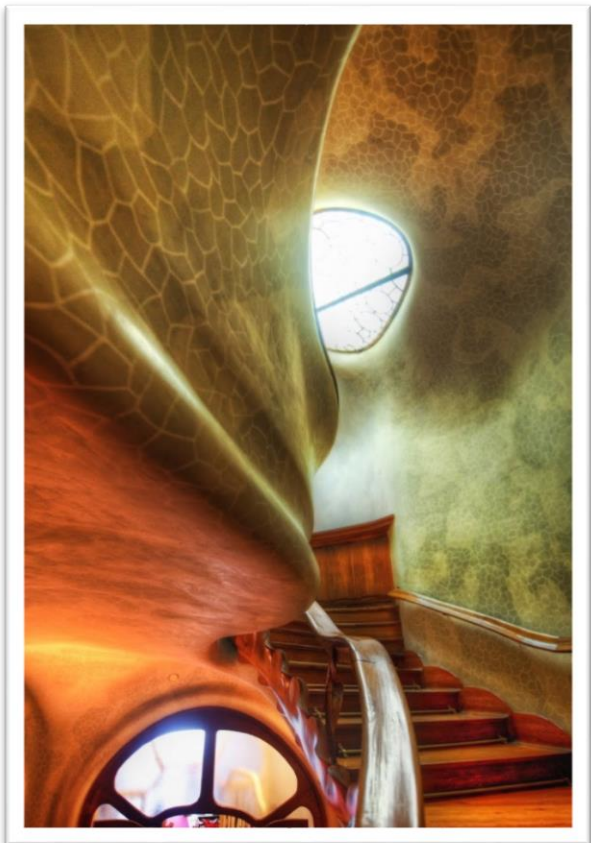
Like its skin, Casa Milà's interior is a fluent rhythm. Expressionistic and wavy, the rhythm defies linearity, providing natural lighting and ventilation. Once a laundry, the attic now houses exhibitions of Gaudí's creations; and how lucky are we for the unique opportunity to see the world through the artist's eyes? It takes an opulent and quaint mind to create La Pedrera's courtyard, with its pipe dream ceilings and wrought iron staircases. It's a beautiful, poetic mind indeed.

Experience it in the late afternoon, when the Barcelona sun slowly sets. Hop up and down the roof terrace, between the warrior chimneys, like a child. Feel the iron gate gently curving under your fingers. Look up, where the ceiling hurtles in a wind of smoke and flowers. It's an eternal spring of surrealism out there, and it should be met with every sense. On the corner of Carrer de Provença and Passeig de Gràcia, Barna is a dream, rhapsodic and whimsical.



Casa Batlló

Try creating a fantasy with nothing but a skeleton. Keep the flesh away, and add a water lily. Gaudí did it, with a human mind and a dash of inspiration. The fantasy unfolded, resulting in what became the most recognizable building in the world – intriguing, controversial and extravagant. With its sheeny scales, Casa Batlló is the wildest of architectural beasts.



Picture 7 The oak staircase representing a dragon's back

Smaller than you might expect, Casa Batlló strikes unnoticed. Hidden in plane site, at the middle of Passeig de Gràcia, a neighbourhood of fashion and lustre, and locally referred to as Casa dels ossos, or the House of Bones, Gaudí's building attracts all kinds of vagabonds. There are those who travel the world rushing towards the next Stendhal syndrome to dim their eyes and make their hearts beat just a little faster; others will read its name in the tourist guide, and finding it intriguing, stop by for a couple of photographs to share with friends back home. They will all stand stupefied and mutter their impressions. But the truth is this – with Casa Batlló on site, only a handful of us will succeed in voicing our thoughts. Gaudí made a phantasm, and its indescribable.

The original building in the 45 Passeig de Gràcia was built in 1877, with no character whatsoever. It was the location, as a guarantee of prominence, that attracted the famous owners. Being the richest fellow on the street, Josep Batlló i Casanovas wanted a house to reflect his flashy persona, and he got more than he had bargained for. Upon his hiring in 1904, Gaudí was given a blank piece of paper and not one restriction. Batlló wished for an audacious living space, and the architect showed him how much fearlessness a building can sustain. Effortlessly, Casa Batlló flashed its ribs.

Transcending himself, Gaudí gave us a visceral structure built around the curvy bones. Legend has it that not one line in the building is straight; so, instead of a construction, the architect created a story. By day, the façade glimmers in hues of golden orange and greenish blue, exposing its

trencadis – like a true Catalan lady, Casa Batlló is covered with broken ceramic tiles, arranged into a mosaic. Split in three harmoniously integrated sections, the façade was made with Montjuic sandstone, yet another of the region's tokens. Above the gallery and across the centre part, the building offers its iron balconies, afloat on the surface of the lake, among water lilies. The glass mosaic reflects the afternoon. Corrugated, the façade's skin is covered with plaster fragments and polychrome pottery, sprinkled with oval windows of multicolored stained glass. And if you see the layout of windows and balconies as an open mouth, you're not entirely wrong; many have interpreted Gaudí's concept in this manner, naming the building "the house of yawns".

At the top, a crown-like gable is displayed, while on the inside, the loft presents the structure's bony frame. Above it, as Gaudí's most powerful artistic design, lays the Casa Batlló roof, all enveloped in cloud nine. Some would say it resembles a dinosaur, others will see a dragon. Either way, the architect's roof clearly showcases a spine, scales and an eye. Each was formed with iridescent ceramic tiles of different colours, with an eye being, in fact, a triangular window. Way back, while Casa Batlló was



new and young, the window looked directly at Sagrada Família; now, the view is blocked by other buildings. The spine, being made with huge sphere-shaped masonry pieces changes its colours as you move along. Yet, the House of Stones has a couple of stories more to tell. The one about the tower and the bulb speaks, once again, of Gaudí's Catholicism. The bulb topping the tower resembles a cross, and bears three different monograms – JHS (Jesus), M (Maria) and JHP (Joseph); made of golden ceramic pieces, monograms are well-marked against the green surface of the bulb. If religion is not your cup of artistic tea, you'll see a receptacle of a flower on the verge of blossoming. And that's the beauty of art for you.



Picture 8 The blue tiles of the building's light well

to the tiled communal stairwell, the entire section is translucent and wavy, with windows distorting the shades of aquamarine blue. The same can be seen with the building's light well, which allows the natural light to float through the entire house. Gaudí



Picture 9 The main façade of Casa Batlló with nocturnal lighting

stood in the sunlight, understanding its importance; as an architect, he toyed with lighting, allowing it to beam free and unconstrained through colours and hues. Hence the light well tiles, dark blue at the top, and lighter at the bottom, and windows, gradually enlarged as the well deepens. The play of daylight and hues of azure, cerulean and aegean is Gaudí's most peaceful architectonic dream.

Experience it at night. If you are a parent, bring your kids along, for Casa Batlló is a child's phantasy. Or a mad man's, since what separates those two is a thin, blurred line. Let them see the venetian-mask balconies and Monet's Nymphs on the façade. Introduce them to a dormant dragon from a rooftop terrace and its breastbones on the inside. As for you, touch the

doorknobs and feel the greatness of the ingenious loon; those are the only true creators.



Sagrada Família

O *meu cliente não tem pressa!*, said Gaudí when asked about the prolonged construction of his life's work. Commenced back in 1882, The Basilica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família or simply, Sagrada Família, has entered the final stage of its construction in 2015, and is believed that it will be finished by 2032. Now, the architect calculated his years well, and was never delusional about his magnum opus outliving him. Passionate as he was, Gaudí left a plan for his successors to follow. And it was an elaborate one.



Picture 10 The partially finished Sagrada Família

movement or influence in the history of architecture. Certainly, Gaudí had his paragons, but his greatness surpassed them. Basilica, thus, became not their imitation, but an individual artistic interpretation. As such, it merged sculpture and engineering, stone and theology, Spanish Late Gothic and Modernism, all in one giant piece of syncretism. Gaudí never existed inside of a frame; like a child, he would demolish it and toy with its shards, until they finally became a mosaic, all polychrome and Catalan.

The same can be said about the building's size. Although Sagrada Família is a basilica, its ground-plan suggests a cathedral-sized construction, with its base very similar to Spanish cathedrals previously built in Burgos, Leon or Seville. In fact, the idea for building a cathedral in Barcelona came from a bookseller enchanted by Vatican's glory, and, although avant-garde, Sagrada Família kept its Catholic background. Gaudí himself was a deeply religious man, but unaccustomed to following the rules. Therefore, his basilica is a masterpiece of church architecture, all the while deviating from all its well-established norms.

It started with chains. The architect had a special modelling technique, and it was, like the rest of his work, unconventional. Obsessed with catenary arches and their natural shape, Gaudí used them as an inspiration for the unique geometry of his buildings. Constructions were modeled with chains hanging upside down, while the actual model reflected in the mirror down below. Gaudí's amazing hanging chain models are what art history had called the method. From that arose the monumental church, the tallest religious building in the world, the cause of artistic and political discussions, a "marvel of technical perfection", a wonder.

As all true pieces of art do, Sagrada Família breaks all existing moulds, proudly dismissing every period,





Picture 11 Joan Vila Grau's stained-glass windows

Entrapped in a world made of animal skeletons and blooming flowers, Gaudí's symbolism remained hermetic. But here, the creator had no intention of hiding his spiritual motifs, and he used all of his brilliance to discover the perfect meaning for every constructional element. Accordingly, if there was a turtle statue, it represented the perpetuity of time; if Gaudí chose a chameleon for a column base, the animal implied eternal transformation. The result is a building of intricate complexity, with each of its details existing as a spiritual symbol, transparent and perspicuous. Twelve spires that Gaudí included in the original plan thus represent the Apostles, four additional spires reference the Evangelist, while the two remaining, the shortest and the highest, should symbolise Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. The Apostles towers surround the building, four of them on each of the three sides, whilst the four towers of Evangelists encircle the central spire, the Tower of the Saviour. Initially, Gaudí planned for this tower to be topped with a giant cross, and with it, reach the height of 170 metres. And in case you're wondering just how beautifully religious Gaudí was, here's a fun fact for you – the measurement is one meter less than the height of Montjuic hill in Barcelona, for the architect regarded that no man's building should out-top a creation of God. As a symbol of Eucharist, Gaudí envisioned lower towers, with communion hosts full of wheat and grape chalices.

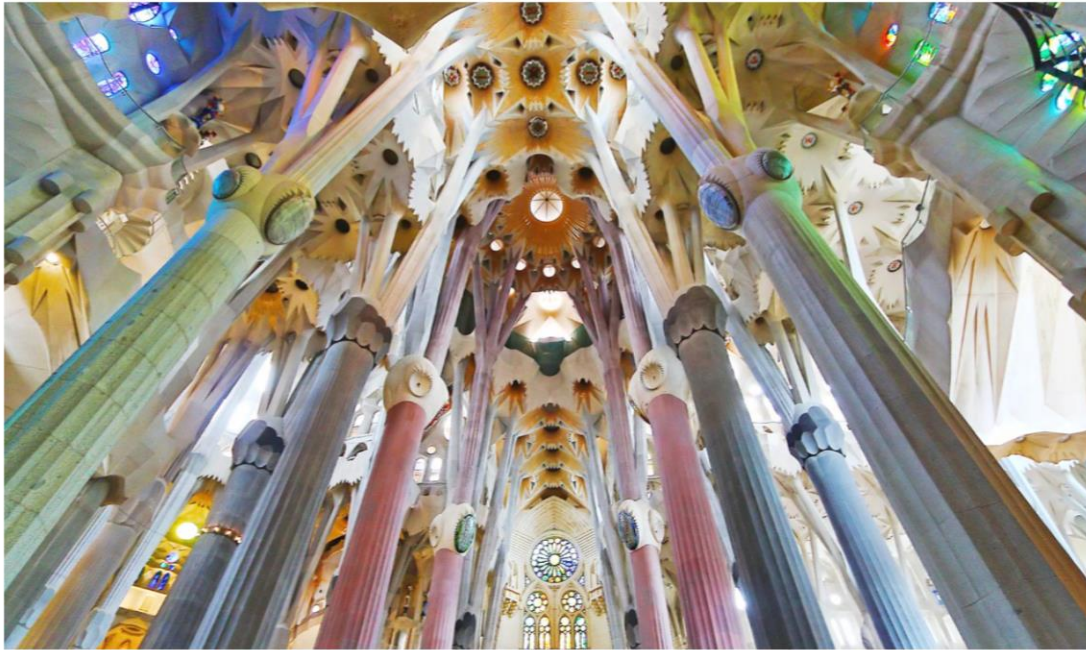
In tune with such a concept, Sagrada Família is designed to have three different facades, each representing a phase of Jesus's life, sacrifice and consecration. The only completely finished one so far welcomes the rising sun, and symbolises Christ's birth. Correspondingly, the façade is a depiction of life itself, and follows Gaudí's distinctive outlook on nature. The façade's portico was constructed with three different hallways, each devoted to one of the three Christian virtues – Charity, Hope and Faith. Being the main one, the Charity hallway is surmounted with The Tree of Life, a cypress with doves, as a symbol of purity. The façade culminates in the fantastic presentation of The Birth of Jesus, along with Christ's genealogy.

Contrary to the eastern façade, the one facing the setting sun on the West indicates Jesus's crucifixion torments. Named the Passion façade, this section of the building is devoted to the Passion of Christ and portrays the sins of men. Thanks to that,



Gaudí's admiration for skeletal forms could be exploited to a greater extent, ornamenting the façade with straight lines to resemble the bones. Other than that, the Passion façade is far more severe; the theme required a dramatic, startling effect – one that strikes an onlooker with all of its mystical magnitude. And Gaudí had accomplished exactly that, using the chiaroscuro effect, straight, strict columns, and the play of light between them. Although much plainer, the Passion façade includes sculptured scenes as well, only now, they represent Stations of the Cross, an array of depictions of Jesus Christ on the day of his crucifixion, starting with The Last Supper at the lowest level, and ending with the Resurrection and the Ascension at the top.

Their creator, however, wasn't Gaudí, but Josep Maria Subirachs i Sitjar, a Spanish sculptor and painter, who refused to follow Gaudí's instruction at the expense of his own artistic mark. One of the most remarkable curiosities of the entire Sagrada Família is another one of Subirachs' works – the Passion façade's cryptogram continues to puzzle believers and agnostics both. As everything else, Gaudí planned the Glory façade to the utmost detail. Even though the original drawings were partially destroyed during the Spanish Civil War, the construction still follows the architect's concept. Upon its finishing, this façade will honour the Celestial Glory of Christ, and set the visitor off to the road to God, presenting the Final Judgement, Hell and Purgatory, among other religious scenes. To round up the symbolic meaning, the foothill will showcase Seven Deadly Sins, contrary to the top's depiction of Seven Heavenly Virtues.



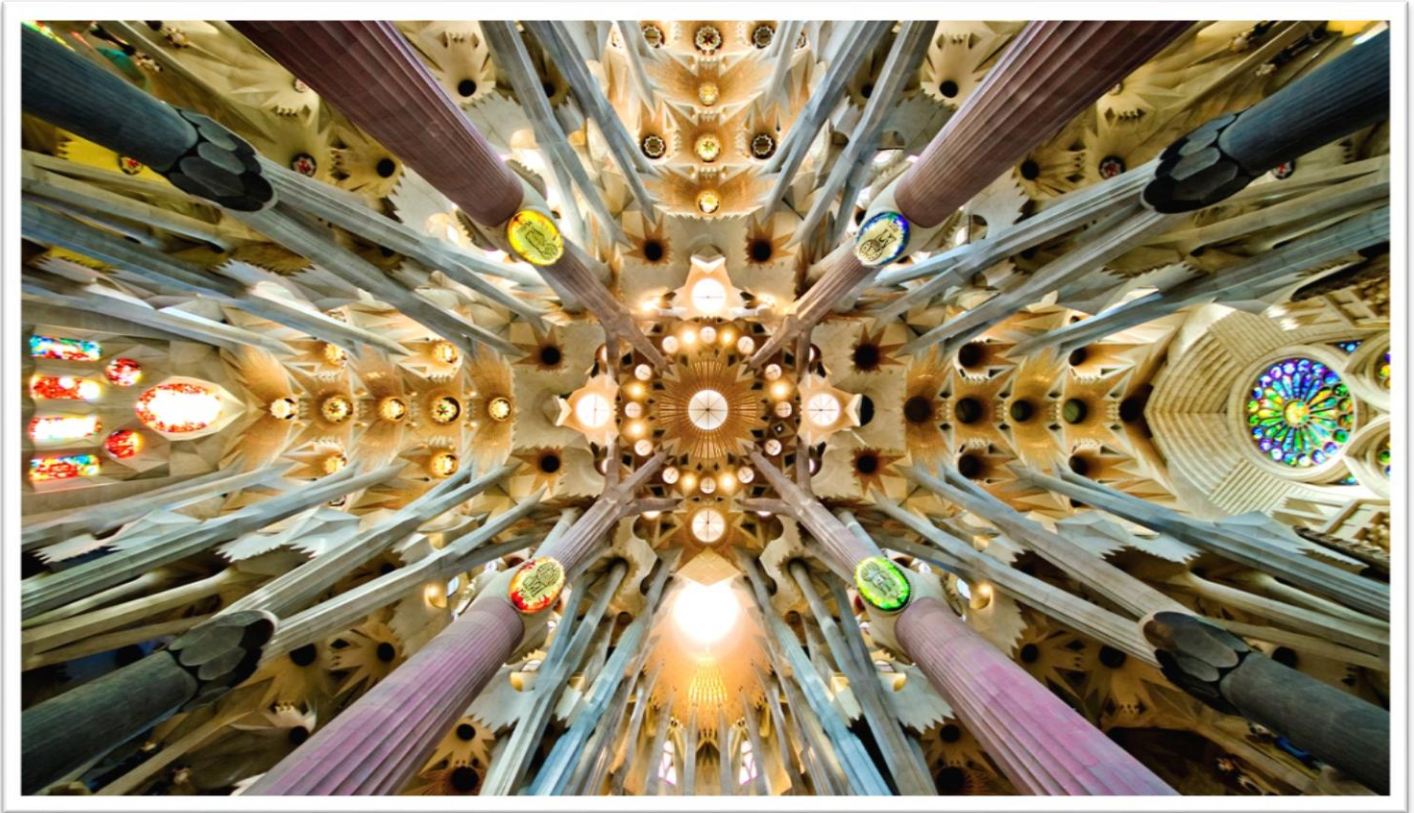
Picture 12 A tree-like column structure on the inside of the church

With the entire building constructed to create an illusion of dizzying verticality, Sagrada Família is, in fact, an elevation towards God. And as a Catholic church, for Gaudí never forgot about its spiritual purpose, it certainly makes a celestial, cathartic experience. On the inside, a tree-like column structure branches upwards, to the ceiling and beyond. Up there, geometrical stars and illumination. Without any flat surface, the apse is an ever-changing, three-dimensional, flickering stone forest.

Gaudí intended the nave to resemble wood in intimacy and depth, and create an atmosphere ideal for introspection. Joan Vila Grau left his unforgettable mark on Sagrada Família's windows, illuminating the inside of the church with soft hues of green, blue, yellow and red; the spectrum changes with the circling of the sun, shining light on the cross-shaped basilica. The stone, ornamented with cherries and grapes. If a higher instance can be reached through art instead of a prayer, Sagrada Família's apse is where such divine contact would be possible. What makes a great story is its ambiguity – the power to raise questions and impose the feeling of ambivalence.



Indeed, Gaudí was a storyteller, and each of his works still provoke laud disputes. Sagrada Família challenged opinions for centuries, but the greatest confrontation it inflames is an internal one. Its grandeur might overwhelm you, yes, but it will stimulate an indecision as well. Seeing the building for the first time, Orwell noted his impression in harsh words; “one of the most hideous buildings in the world”, he called it. Ultimately, that’s the magic of creation – the potency to raise doubt and, through purification, convince us to discard it.



Picture 13 Detail of the roof in the nave. Gaudí designed the columns to mirror trees and branches.

Park Güell

There's a feeling of serenity only a hill and a park can endow us with. Overlooking Barcelona, Park Güell is vivacious, but calm. In the afternoon, it reflects its blues and oranges, and smells like the Mediterranean hills. On the high ground, a fresh wind blends with hot air and the sun-heated ground. The landscape explodes quietly. Beyond the city, the sea awaits.

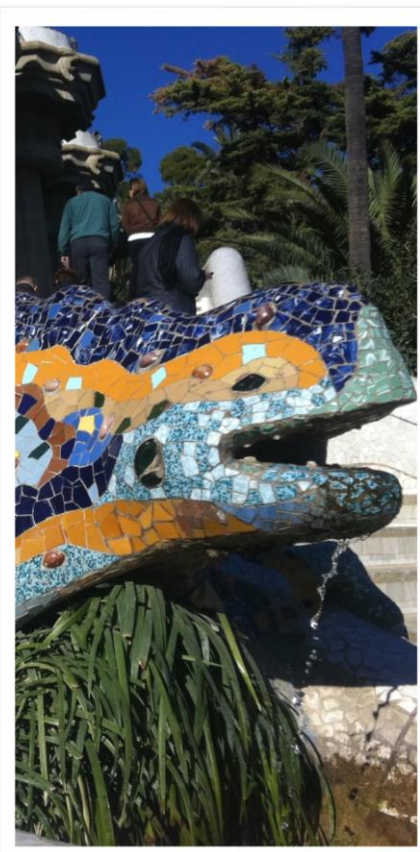


Picture 14 The rosette on the ceiling of Hypostyle Room, designed by Josep Maria Jujol

Built between 1900 and 1914, and opened to the public in 1926, Park Güell quickly became Barcelona's favorite refuge site, attracting hundreds of nature-hungry citizens. At the beginning, the park was envisioned as an organized community of high-quality homes, designed for aristocratic comfort and contact with the outdoors. The initial plan was influenced by the English garden city movement, and included sixty family residences with vast gardens situated on a Muntanya Pelada, the Bare Mountain, in the very neighborhood of Gràcia district. A utopian housing development, Eusebi Güell called it. And like all other utopias, the project failed terribly – no buyers were interested in making the park their home, and the building was put to sleep before it actually began. What's left are two houses and a Gaudí castle in the air, surreal and sublime.

Nowadays, Park Güell exists as a public park system, one of the dreamiest in the world. In addition to gardens and two residences, Gaudí included a variety of architectonic elements to the complex. The architect's geometry, complemented with his affection for organic forms allowed Gaudí to create a natural wonder with nature itself. Constructed with live material, the park now serves as a pleasure garden for those who seek the piece of never-never land. At the entrance, Gaudí's Salamander greets them lazily in the sun.

Popularly known as el drac, or the dragon, the figure stands at the split of the staircases; covered with Gaudí's trademark ceramic tile mosaic, it guards the entryway to the park. A fountain rises, revealing goblin-like shapes, leading on to the emblem of Catalonia. Above the stairways, the vast Nature Square spreads, surrounded by the park's highlight, the continuous, undulating, wave-like bench. Although it was Gaudí's idea, the bench itself, marked by Salvador Dalí as the precursor of surrealism, was designed by Josep Maria Jujol, yet another Modernist Spanish artist, and Gaudí's assistant. As sea serpent, the bench meanders, creating niches and enclaves. Over Barcelona, everything sways and flows. From the esplanade, which was once intended to be a Greek Theatre, the sights of the Catalan capital are bright and clear. Underneath the plaza lays the Hypostyle Room, supporting it with its 86 Doric columns, because of which the room was named the Hall of 100 Columns. Gaudí loved his forests of stone, and over here,



Picture 15 Gaudí's dragon, guarding the entrance stairway



the treetops were replaced with rosettes on the ceiling, another work of Jujol, representing, in Trencadis technique, the four seasons. Further on, The Casa del Guarda appears with a charm of the house of sweets. Built as a porter's lodge, a moderate dwelling designed as a home for the family of the residences' caretaker, it now holds the exhibition *Güell, Gaudí and Barcelona, the expression of an urban idea*, which tells the story of the park's history. A few steps forth, and the architecture comes alive, swaying and twining. Passing through an iron door and approaching the former gardens of Casa Larrard, where Güell himself lived in bygone days, a traveler will discover The Laundry Room Portico, the essential example of Gaudí's organic-shaped structures. The Portico is where architecture escapes the power of language; the colonnade, made of unworked stone, with columns supporting the wall, resembles a grove, or a wave. As it tricks our perception, the Portico stays undefined in shape, size and depth. In the heart of the park, stands one of the two houses ever built, all pink and lovely. Designed by Gaudí's friend and assistant, Francesc Berenguer i Mestres, but signed by Gaudí himself, the house was built as a show object, in order to attract buyers. Later on, la Torre Rosa, situated on a sloping land, with three stores and a pointed tower, became Gaudí's personal residence. During the twenty-year tenancy, Gaudí changed the interior and added a porch. Now, the house is open to the public, and hosts The Gaudí House Museum, further promoting the architect's imposing heritage.



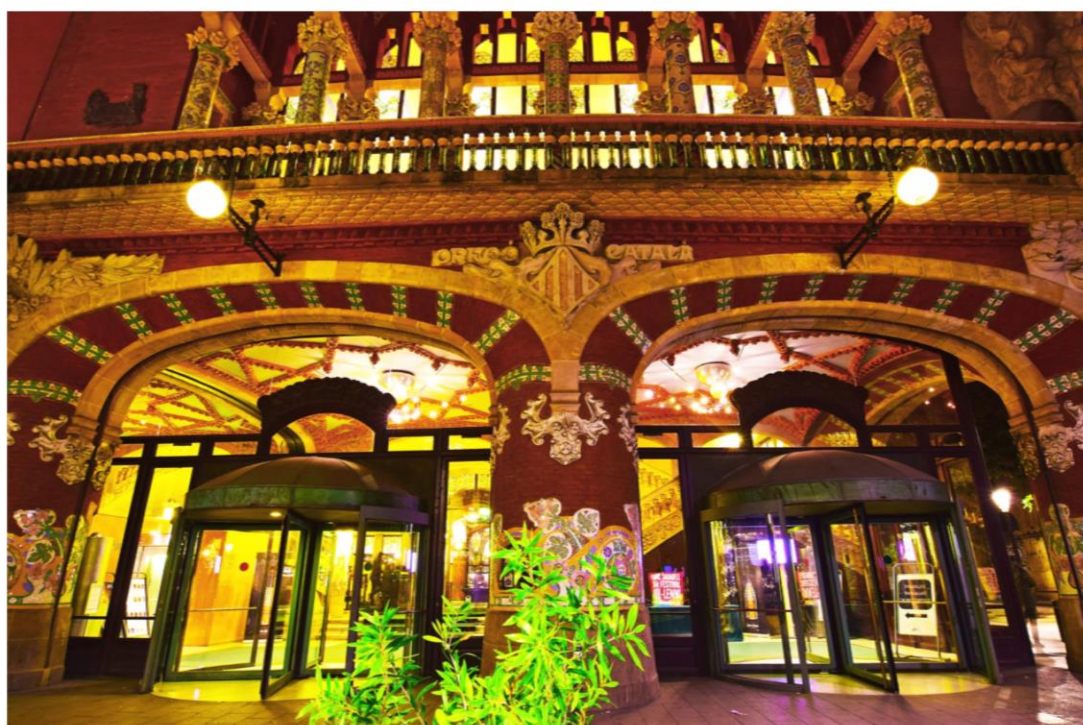
Picture 16 The only two houses at the park's entrance

Enjoy it on a cloudless day, and drag a book along. Sit on a bench and read. Facing the sea, surrounded by stone waves and hummingbird moths, greet the owl-light and breathe in the beauty. Beneath the palm trees, wander off into a starry Barcelona night.



Palau de la Música Catalana

The old towns. Time capsules at the very heart of the metropolis. You can discover them by smell, for their air is heavy with years past and fragrant with spices. In the middle of Barcelona, La Ribera beats slowly, temptingly. On the cramped Carrer de Sant Francesc de Paula, stands Barna's most songful building – Palau de la Música Catalana. Separated from the rest of its Modernistic generation, the concert hall stands alone, chic and stylish. Constructed between 1905 and 1908, as a work of Lluís Domènech i Montaner, the building was commissioned by a choral society Orfeó Català, the leader of the new Catalan rebirth, the *Renaixença*, and financially supported by Barna's upper society. Once promoting the local musicians, by now, the Palau de la Música Catalana stage has been opened to hundreds of greats, Stravinsky and Strauss among them.



Picture 17 The Palau de la Música Catalana's main entrance under the colonnades

On a corner, Miguel Blay's sculptural group presents passion for music, entirely Catalan. Architecture's transformations are many; the crafty lady does not play only with stone, but with music and poetry. In the sonant La Ribera, Palau de la Música Catalana erupt with notes. Instead of a façade, it writes musicians in stone; busts of Beethoven, Bach, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Wagner adorn the walls. Beneath them, the building is supported with colonnades. The entrance pillars, the central one being the former ticket booth, were made with red bricks and dressed in floral mosaics. Being, after all, a voguish building, Palau de la Música Catalana is opulent with those, and still makes place for glazed tiles and stained glass. The one at the front, made by Lluís Bru, stands as an allegory, showcasing the Orfeó Català's members. Slightly Spanish and Arabic, the La Ribera concert hall exudes the *Renaixença*.

The theme continues upon entering. In the foyer, brick pillars ascend together with glazed ceramic flowers, in pinks and greens; between them lies the bar. Instead of the ceiling, stained-glass panes were installed, adding the transparency while creating a juxtaposition with massive brick arches. Imposing and spacious, the vestibule takes visitors to the second floor;

As all great buildings in Barna are, Palau de la Música Catalana is nothing but hip. With its modernistic curves and Renaissance flowers, the concert hall represents the Catalan early 20th century architecture beyond Gaudí's work. Similarly, the building's shapes are dynamic, its ornamentation lavish, and its motifs organic. Still, the Montaner building is not just another undulated structure in a row; it curves its way out of the mass with its rationality, its bricks and irons.

From the crowded street appears the façade, rich and



above their heads, ceramic stars sparkle. With everything marble and illuminated, the pair of staircases, one on the left, and the other to the right, rise between columns with crowned lamps. The yellow glistens. Yellow glass balusters support the staircase balustrade, transparently. On the underside, tiles gleam, forming canopies. Inside of a glass case, a banner represents the music hall's patron, the Orfeó Català society.

On the second floor, a concert-goer can rest in the Lluís Millet hall, the Palau's salon. Reaching the height of two consecutive floors, the salon's windows face the outside columns, allowing the visitor to examine its ceramic mosaics closely. Partially covered with stained glass, windows shine reds, yellows and blues on wooden benches, the hall's only seats. Except for those, the hall is furnished solely with decorative bronze busts in honor of Orfeó Català's members and others musicians that have written the history of the building.

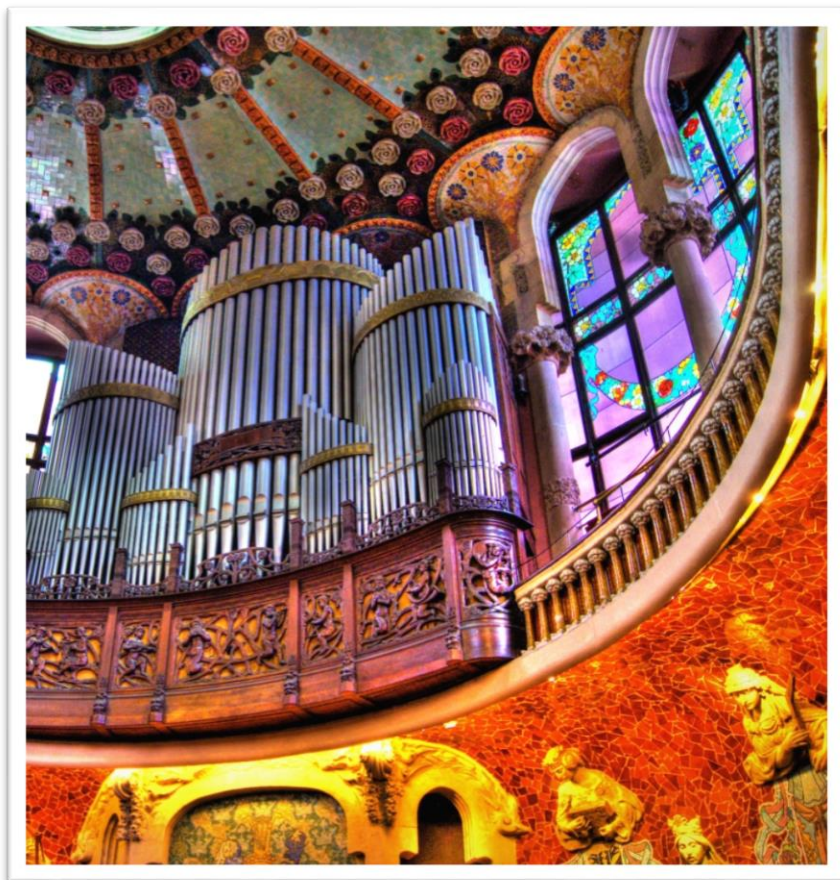


Picture 18 The Lluís Millet hall

And the concert hall! The complexity and music! Its shades and light! Antoni Rigalt illuminated it with sun. His ceiling centerpiece, a convex dome made of stained glass, permits the daylight to enter the hall; as a result, the Palau's concert hall is the only one of the sort in the world entirely illuminated with natural light, passing through the skylight golds, reproducing the sun, and blues, representing the sky. Aside, stained-glass window-panes entrap the light. Down below, the hall holds place for 2200 lucky enjoyers.

On walls, the continuous decorative motif is a choir; a group of young women surrounds the bust of the choir director Anselm Clave, singing *Les Flors de Maig*. The stage, magnificent and wide, is richly ornamented with this motif as well. Up and front, the arch, sculptured by Pablo Gargallo and Didac Masana, merges folk music with classical compositions; representing the first, the artists have sculptured Wagner's *Valkyries*, taken directly from the opera *Die Walkure*; the latter is depicted with the Beethoven's bust, standing firmly between two columns of Doric style.





Picture 19 The organ outflanking the scene

On the back, the folk and the classical art is supported by a sculpture of 18 muses, each dressed differently and adorned with mosaics works on the lower body parts. The work of Eusebi Arnau and Lluís Bru, splendid and lovely. Above the apse outflanking the stage, on the balcony, winged horses represent Pegasus, powerfully symbolizing the imagination, afar and far-flung.

Nourish your fantasy. With dark days around the corner, La Ribera is gentle and forgetting. Lost in the narrow streets, the mind rambles with glee. And that's the warmth of a big city; lost and dusty, architectural gems await to be discovered. Palau de la Música Catalana shines like a diamond.

Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau

Art inspires and heals. If its task is to sooth those tired and weary, its power to carry a plate full of remedies to those lying sick brings immense hope; it's why the world is a merrier place. So, when scrabbling down a list of Barna's architectural landmarks to visit, never dismiss its hospitals, for they will bring you peace and calm. Surmounted by trees, Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau is a treasure of tranquillity, the greatest among medical buildings.



Picture 20 The central building of the hospital

Through centuries of architecture and science, Barcelona's most famous hospital grew inch by inch. Dating from the medieval times, the building, formerly known as Hospital de la Santa Creu, is now 6 centuries old. With two major transformations and numerous restorations, the complex became vast and green. Back in the 15th century, the hospital was formed as a juncture of six medical buildings, indispensable for providing care to the large number of patients infected with plague. During that period, the hospital was considered as preeminent in Europe. Even then, facing the pest, its aesthetic wasn't neglected, and the construction ascended in all of its Gothic glory. Utilitarian *and* alluring, the hospital took care of diseased and served as an orphanage. In 1801, it widened even more and became a teaching hospital, with The Catalan Medical School integrated into the complex and opened for students.



One century leap into the future, and the Hospital de la Santa Creu underwent yet another significant change. This time, the Modernism fever was at its peak, and the complex suffered its huge organic mark. Commenced in 1902 as Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, the compound was ordered by administration and supported with Pau Gil's legacy, whose name was added to the original title. Dedicated to the research in the field of medicine even before, the hospital was now established as a science centre, merging seven scientific entities into one campus of knowledge. For such purposes, the administration hired Lluís Domènech i Montaner, who made the hospital, in addition to Palau de la Música Catalana, his second masterpiece. It's noted that the architect, as perspicacious as he was, travelled the Europe in pursuit of inspiration, learning simultaneously the newest architectural tendencies in construction of medical facilities.



Picture 21 Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, seen from above

Upon his return, the complex was expanded with green surfaces, libraries, a church, and a series of infirmary pavilions, mutually connected with underground passages. The architect wanted his hospital to be a place of comfort and consolation for living and dying both. Therefore, each of the pavilions, in addition to the main department designed for bedrest, had another room where those not tied to the bed could reside in peace and quiet, alone or with their families.

Deeply impacted by nature, as all Modernists were, Montaner envisioned a place where life thrives; in its celebration, each pavilion, as the complex itself, were endowed with gardens, performing not only an ornamental role, but also contributing to the well-being of convalescents, both physical and spiritual. No man is in need of colour more than an ill one; for those, the artist included redbrick walls to the gardens' greenery. The roofs were pitched, and covered with variegated clay tiles. Catalan mosaics in hues of yellow and red envelope the pavilions. Nature was adopted as a decorative motif, looping a message of optimism, healing and rebirth. Sunlight penetrates the buildings, offering relief. In the face of malady, Montaner stood poetic.

And we should too. Afraid of life's deviations, we bypass health centres, leaving them to those less fortunate. Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau glorifies life, observing it closely. It studies, improves and grows. Emphatic, it stands elegant and striking. A nurse in a velvet coat, nurturing Gaudí to his death. Worth a visit, and a sigh.



Eixample

Ildefons Cerdà was a sad man. Once an artwork is done, and the afflatus is painfully, irretrievably gone, the troubles remain. An artwork becomes public welfare, exposed and vulnerable, and the artist wanes empty in his postpartum blankness. Eager to shower Barcelona with sunlight and adorn it with trees, Cerdà died disappointed, penniless. The visionary's faith was unavoidable and cruel.

In the mid-19th century, Barna was still a medieval damsel. With its walls high and thick, the city was closed to foreigners; on the outside, the Industrial Revolution raved. All of the rural Spain was on the move, persistently trying to breach the brick boundaries, until, finally, the boundaries fell down. As Barcelona broadened, the need arose for its urban extension. Poor living conditions and pollution led to the outburst of cholera, as the vast number of incomers continued to overcrowd the city. The order was indispensable, and the government called for a competition to find a man capable of arranging the entire city, the same way as the lesser mind would arrange a garden. Among others, Ildefons Cerdà appeared, and modern Barcelona was put to paper, all octagonal and multifarious. The building of the Eixample has, since then, been a story of one man raising a city from its foundations.



Picture 22 Ildefons Cerdà's octagonal blocks seen from above

Situated between Ciutat Vella, the Barna's charming old district and the medieval soul of the city, and the rural immigrants' settlements, Sants, Sant Andreu, Gràcia and so on, the Eixample is now Barcelona's unique epicentre. Seen from above, Cerdà's wonder of urban planning is instantly recognizable for its rectangular blocks divided by long, straight streets, parallel with each other, cut transversely with wide Avinguda Diagonal, and split in Eixample left and Eixample right with the district's jugular vein, the Passeig de Gràcia. The initial design follows the strict grid pattern across the 7,5 square kilometres district with consistency; calmly well-organized from the satellite view, the area holds 520 seemingly identical blocks, each of them self-sustainable, with variety of public institutions included. Markets, schools and hospitals are at walking distance from every block, establishing the Eixample as the fairyland for urbanists. In the beginning, however, the district was a bit more magical.

Urban planning is a tricky business, still, Cerdà had a big dream, and it merged aesthetics and convenience with wit. Having to deal with issues of traffic and transport, ventilation and illumination, he came up with utopian solution. Revolutionary octagonal blocks, or manzanas, were envisioned as rectangular blocks with chamfered corners, cut off at an angle of 45 degrees. That way, streets were widened at intersections, making enough space for a steam tram, for which the engineer believed to be the future of public transport. It was a long time ago, and Cerdà was terribly wrong; the tram was never built, but



the intersections remained. But there was another idea of his that came out terribly wrong. According to the initial designs, the manzanas were imagined as square blocks with one or two open sides, making place for urban greenery, with buildings positioned northwest – southeast. The concept was obvious, and brilliant, for that matter. Not squeezed, but surrounded by gardens, the block buildings would have been sun-bathed and illuminated with natural light.

One by one, blocks had started to close with new construction sites running over the greenery; soon enough, squares were stacked with new buildings from each of the four sides. Now, most of the blocks are hollow on the inside, where tenants enjoy peace of the shaded courtyards. If not transformed into parking space or grey, concrete playgrounds for children, they are redesigned as miraculous urban oases with palm trees, artificial beaches and pools. Despite some public efforts to re-establish Cerdà's primary plan, some manzanas were completely restructured as shopping malls and parking garages. Yet another one of the primary intentions was gradually cast aside. Built as a city district for immigrants, the Eixample was to be a mixed-society centre, a promised land for the middle class; with its reputation surpassing its purpose, the area became expensive, and is now a residence of the very cream of Barcelona's society.



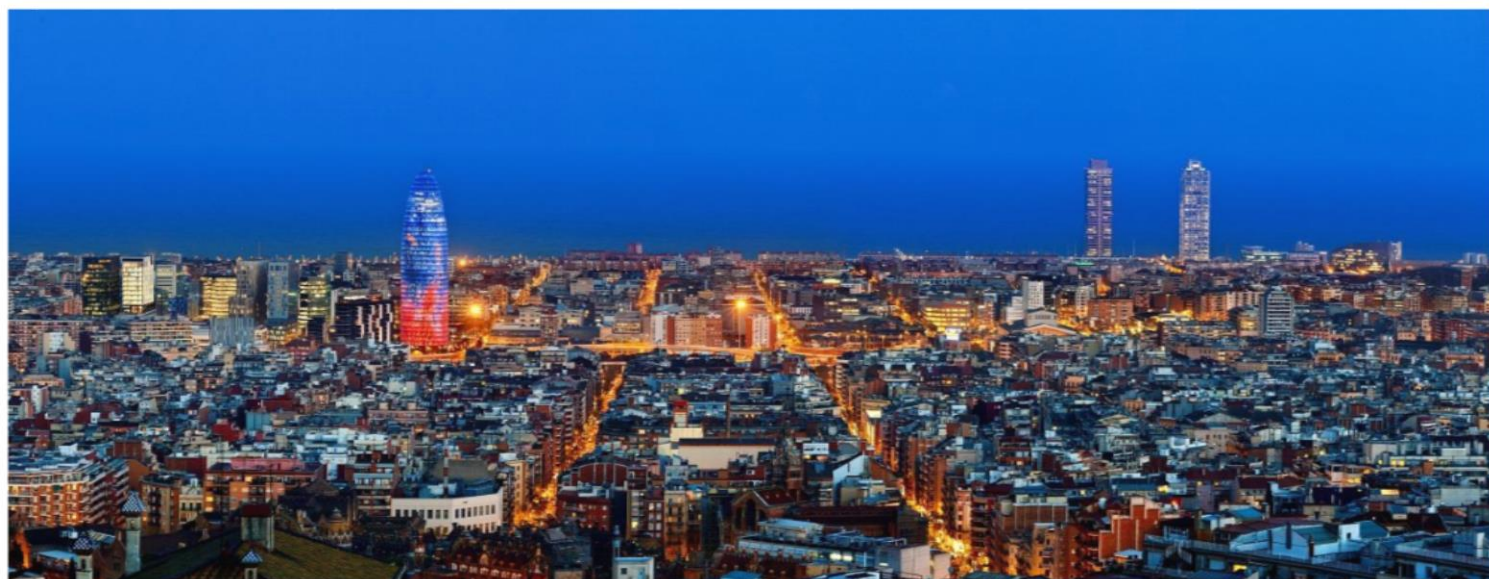
Picture 23 The Eixample's street greenery

Be that as it may, the Eixample is still a marvel of urban planning, charming, fragrant and vibrant. Cultures are still many, with shoppers, coffee-lovers and museum-goers in the lead. Passeig de Gràcia shines its Modernista lights in the night, and Gaudí smiles, raising his glass to fellow masters, Montaner and Josep Puig i Cadafalch among them. As for Cerdà, his visions will continue to awe us all.



Torre Agbar

In a city as beautifully modernistic as Barcelona, the clocks are slightly broken, with their needles indicating the rise of the 20th century. To its inhabitants, Modernism is now an archaic, magical concept, the marking of a golden age. What came afterwards is simply *modern*. Once the high-tech architecture set off for Barna, its paths were not paved, but dusty. In cities so stubborn, so tucked in their own cultural cradles, novelties are rarely welcomed. Especially when they are tall, flashy, eye-catching and foreign. Therefore, when Torre Agbar had started to shape up, it was greeted with a frown.



Picture 24 The Barcelona skyline, with Torre Agbar on the left

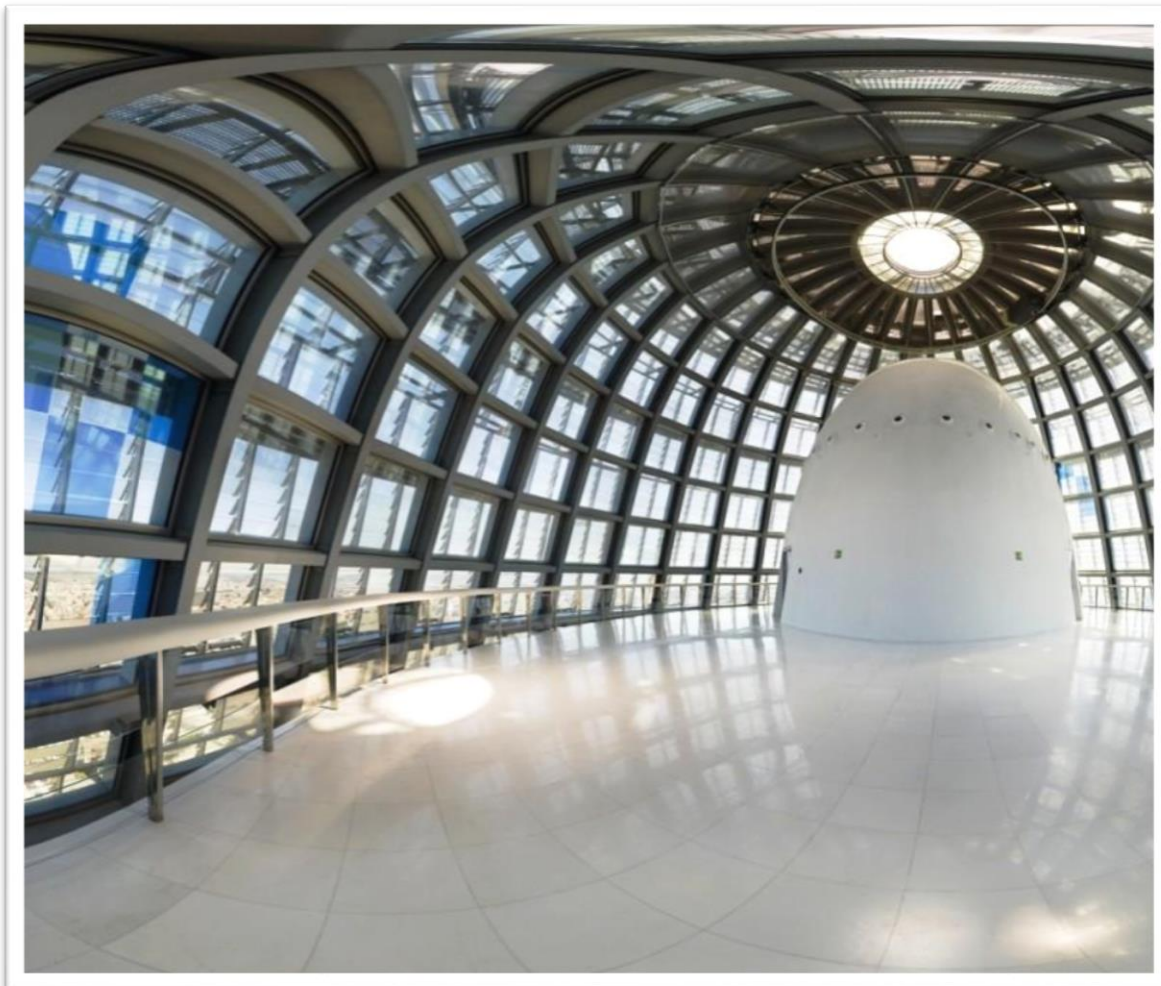
The first nail in the skyscraper's foundations was slammed in 1992, and followed up by billions more, craftily handled by 1170 workers on site. What arose was a 38 stories high tower, the keeper of the city's new technological district's gates, and its hallmark. In 2005, when the building was officially finished, Torre Agbar became a subject of speculations and ridicule. With criticism finally pacified, and all the dust settled down, the high-tech architecture finally found its ground in Barcelona, the long way around. The apology came quickly afterwards, and the Frenchman behind the skyscraper, Jean Nouvel, declared his artistic program, teaching a lesson on how to find poetry in steel and aluminium. Experimental, but beautiful.

Inspired by Barcelona's Montserrat, Jean Nouvel claimed that Torre Agbar was, in fact, an ode to Barna's cultural heritage. Therefore, its façade pays respect to the bell towers of Sagrada Família, with one side of the tower facing Gaudí's masterwork. Other than that, the skyscraper is purely modern; constructed with two concentric, reinforced concrete oval cylinders, the inner being entirely enveloped by the outer one, it ascends in a peculiar shape, imitating, in many aspects, the London's Gherkin.

The interpretations are various, and never lack in creativity; Torre Agbar is, thus, called "el supositori" (the suppository) or "l'obús" (the shell), and compared to a phallic symbol. Interestingly enough, the designer imagined the building as a geyser, raising up into the sky. The façade, made entirely of glass and aluminium strips (59,612 of them) is why Nouvel is named the master of surface design. However, it was another francophone artist, Yann Kersale, who changed Barcelona's skyline.



Thanks to him, Torre Agbar erects as a unique, glowing growth, illuminated, colourful. Like a crystal fountain, some would say. With a system of 4500 LED devices, and a possibility of emitting nearly 16 million different hues, the tower stands not intrusive, but mirage-like. In collaboration with temperature sensors, the lighting technology is smart and sensitive to weather changes. In its software-based lyricism, the façade absorbs the surrounding, and adapt to its tiniest trembles. As the sun sets, Torre Agbar is orange and golden; in bleak mornings, it evokes water; in hot summer nights, it's ablaze, covered in fire.



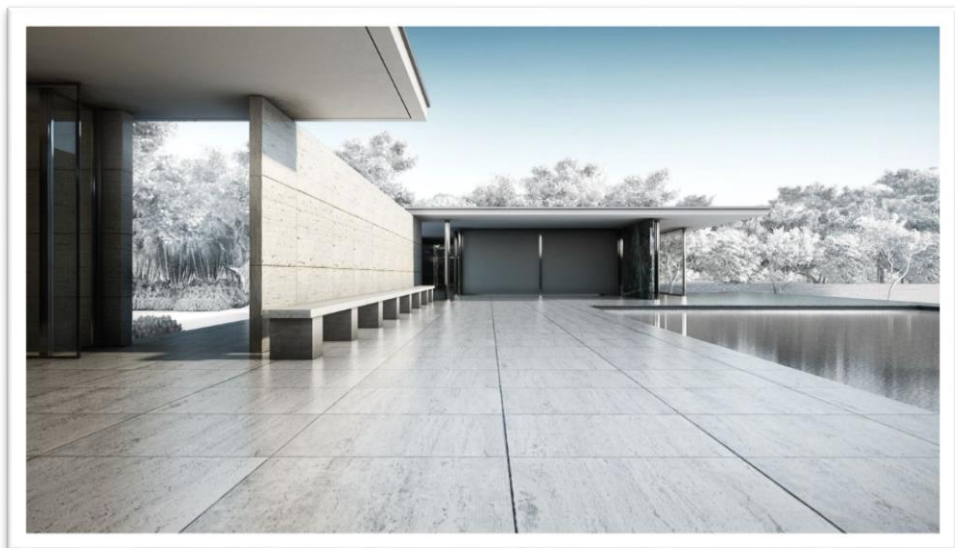
Picture 25 The inside of the tower's top

This architecture comes from the earth but does not have the weight of stone, explained the master. And indeed – reconciling with its redbrick neighbours, Torre Agbar is translucent and ethereal.



The Barcelona Pavilion

Inviting and playful, Barcelona stands as one of the chattiest cities. Although it lacks nothing, its Mediterranean tradition makes it humble; its history is written in stone, and embellished with tile shreds, all colourful and shiny. At the end of the day, lightened by reds and blues, Barcelona is gentle and joyful. Its architecture is the city's self-portrait.



Picture 26 The Pavilion's exterior with an outside pool

Standing out from the complexity of its undulated modernistic casas and opulent, Gothic residences, the Barcelona Pavilion flows quietly. *An ideal zone of tranquillity*, its master called it. And indeed; as envisioned, the Pavilion is adept in healing the overwhelmed mind. Travelling from Sagrada Família to the Poble Espanyol, an explorer may get weary; as the resting place, in the middle of the jammed tourist route, he will stumble upon the architectural oasis of simplicity and peace, the only one of its kind. Instead of Catalan fervency, he will get German equanimity, and with that, a solemn moment of purification.

The first few decades of the 20th century reflected differently in the various parts of Europe. And while architecture in Barcelona was led by Gaudí and his Modernistas, Germany was deeply impacted by the Bauhaus scholars. With war coming to an end, German artists plead their intellectual forgiveness; the promise of culturally democratic and pacifist new Weimar Germany echoed far. The spirit of a new era eventually spread to Barcelona, meddling with its artistic roots. As a part of the International Exposition of 1929, the German Republic commissioned a building to be used for an official opening of its section. On the receiving end was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the modernist architect of German-American origin. Their collaboration was what finally brought minimalism to Barcelona.

In each and every sense, the Barcelona Pavilion is eccentric. The paradox lies in this: marked as experimental, the building is the simplest, barest construction in Barna. Its artistic surrounding made it infinitely interesting, and ultimately, everlasting. However divergent from buildings presented at Block of Discord, the Pavilion keeps the continuous flow preached by Modernists. Only now, the flow is of a different kind – instead of the organic geometry and biomimetic aesthetics, Mies used clean, plane strikes. As a result, his construction is not an unceasing wave, but an endless conversation between the building's inside and its exterior. The blurred lines between those create a continuous space, an optical illusion of the construction immersing into the environment, with no boundaries to separate them. Implementing neat lines, Mies paid his respect to minimalism, as well as to the perfect symmetry proclaimed by Bauhaus.

Other than that, the Pavilion is iconic for several more reasons. While stone and ceramics dominated the city's architecture, the artist here chose materials of extravagance; four different types of marble were used in the construction, with additions of red onyx and travertine. With those, Mies played gently; smooth and clean, these materials helped the concept of a free plan – the open design with no load-bearing walls. Undivided, the inner space kept its free flow. As a support, planes were installed on the



inside of the building, carrying not just structural, but a conceptual significance as well. Imagined as a pit spot to refuel a traveller, the building itself navigates the visitor.

The planes, made of high-grade stone materials, primarily golden onyx and antico marble, with glass, both translucent and tinted, steer the visitor on his path through the Pavilion. Simultaneously, they maintain geometrical purity and partially parcel the space. With one of them prolonging to the outside, Mies' explains the distinction between structure and enclosure, emphasising, once again, the character of an open-plan space. The same significance bears the floor, constructed with a travertine plith, and projecting out and over the outside pool. Using nothing but flat-surface slabs, the architect created a brilliant play between what used to be the clear dynamics between interior and exterior, and made it his poetics.



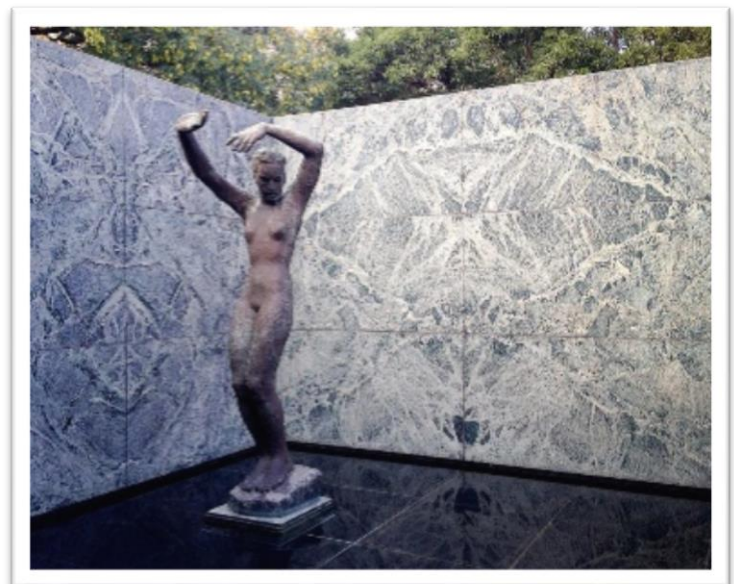
Picture 27 One of the interior planes, prolonging to the outside

Inspired by the Roman Curule chair, the chair was to make the Spanish Royalty comfortable during the exhibition ceremonies. The other, less debatable, is a sculpture by Georg Kolbe, yet another German; the Alba. Its name translates as the Dawn, and is ground-breaking in terms of collaboration between architecture and free art. Mies chose its location carefully—the sculpture stands in the smaller, shallow pool, making the larger one seem even more empty; furthermore, it reflects not just in the pool water, but in marble and glass surfaces too, multiplying, thus, throughout the Pavilion. As “the curves and irregularities of the human form contrast with the geometrical purity of the building”, Alba stands solitary, in stillness.

Bare and continuous, the Barcelona Pavilion is a small, minimalistic miracle of the Bauhaus era in the otherwise exuberant, curvaceous Barna. Rest there for a moment, and the soothing ways of architecture will imbue you. Cleansed, continue on through the throng.

But that's not all, for the Barcelona Pavilion became an example to follow due to another one of its architectural element. As an exhibition house, the building holds no furniture, except for two pieces. The first, the Barcelona chair, the popular holy object among architects, was designed by Mies as a deviation from

Bauhaus “common man furniture” standard.



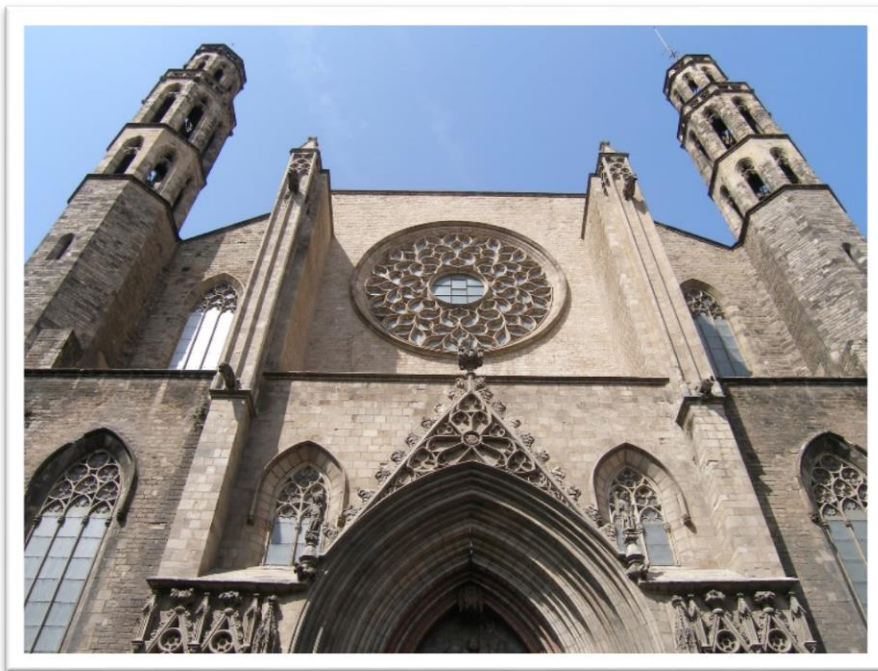
Picture 28 The Alba by Georg Kolbe



Santa Maria del Mar

Sacred places, scattered throughout Barcelona, keep the city firmly attached to its roots. With Sagrada Família on sight, the city's religious beliefs are grandiosely honoured, and imposed, clearly, to those who come to praise them. Gaudí's work, however, is not the only haven for believers. In fact, by many of them, it is rejected for its lavishness; following their Catholic traditions with severity, those pious enough would rather address their beliefs in a place more secluded, and therefore, closer to God. Dating back from the 14th century, Santa Maria del Mar is the holy ground of choice for hundreds of followers.

Laying the foundation stone, king Alfonso IV of Aragon solemnized the building of the church in 1329. The construction, lasting for approximately 60 years, employed every guild in the district. In their honour, the main door of the church was sculptured with figures of workers in their physical labours, personally transporting stones upon their backs. Like the door, the basilica-type church is an Early Catalan Gothic building, and one of the finest. Treated with respect, the architectural style of the epoch dominates in all the structural aspects, with minor peculiarities in addition. The architects, Berenguer de



Picture 29 The elegant lines of the Santa Maria del Mar's facade

Montagut and Ramon Despuig, created the building with unity and purity unconventional for medieval architectural solutions. Valued for its sober horizontal structure and soaring vertical lines, the church is atypically tall and bare. With three aisles, the whole construction and its proportions were based upon the number eight, being a symbol of the Virgin Mary. The medieval concept of "ad quadratum" dictates that the aisles surrounding the central nave must be half its size, which, as a structural method, is essentially Gothic. The naves, evenly high, were sustained by stone-built columns, which are considered to be the slenderest in the world. With distance between them, the church is spacious and illuminated; the same effect of capaciousness is provided by stained-glass windows. And while the interior awakens the feeling of serenity, the exterior is far stricter in appearance. Although it's hard to comprehend the entire building from the street view, due to the narrow streets of La Ribera, the façade in its elements can be examined closely. The elegant lines of the niches, placed on the both sides of the door facing West, depict Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The tympanum showcases the Saviour, with Saint John and Our Lady on the sides. In addition, 24 chapels were made to honour the saints, one chapel for each; some elements included in their construction are held in high regard, as extraordinary works of art, the Window of the Ascension and the Lavabo primarily, the first being the part of the chapel of Santa Maria, and the second belonging to the chapel dedicated to Saint Rafael.

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Picture 30 One of the church's stained-glass windows, seen from the inside

We all pray to different gods; how we find our inner peace is our personal choice. Being universal, art greatly surpasses the boundaries we've established among us, and for that, it deserves plaudits. Therefore, upon finding yourself on streets of Catholic Barcelona, whatever heaven you might be striving towards, pay a visit to its churches, for they are bequest of our mutual past. Be gentle and kind, and you might learn something you have never known about the world surrounding us, and ultimately, discover a long-hidden part of yourself.



Parc de la Ciutadella

History teaches, they say. Yet, history is a heavy burden; rarely are the days past light and tinted with brightness. For most, they tell of powder and dust, and remain a threat and a warning. Only when it brings us liberation, the history is empowering. Like many unprivileged do, Catalans take pride in their days of old. In the Parc de la Ciutadella, they've buried their hatchets some time ago, now freely enjoying the above-sprouted grass. It's a celebration of historical progress, the new life, relieved and promised.



Picture 31 The giant mammoth statue guarding the city's zoo

It's curious that the park was once a fortress; the greenery – a prison for political offenders. Built in 1714, and ordered by Philip V of Spain, the Ciutadella was to control and defend. For centuries, it stood as an object of Catalan hate; a synonym for oppression and imprisonment. Occupying what once was a part of La Ribera district, the fortress left hundreds of civilians homeless and, furthermore, employed them by force in torturous construction that lasted approximately three years.

What followed was a century of unstable political climate, throughout which the fortress was intermittently destroyed and restored. Ultimately, in 1869, the occasions were solid enough for the city's liberalisation, and the final transformation of the citadel was ordered by General Prim, to whom the modern Barcelona raised an equestrian statue, now visible at the north-western entrance to the park. The year thus symbolically represents the end of the regressive, centralist regime of Spain, and the beginning of a new, flourishing era for Catalonia, which is still eagerly striving towards its national autonomy.



Now, the park consists of several historically significant structures. With some of the old buildings demolished back in 1869, a big part of the site was transformed into a park under the supervision of Josep Fonteserè in 1872. From that point on, the greenery was enriched with a pond and a fountain, museums and a zoo. Savouring its political success, the city turned one of the former citadel buildings into the Parliament of Catalonia.

So, what to see when you're not laying around on the grass soaking up the sweet Catalan air of freedom and opportunities? The Cascada, for starters, off course. The fountain, designed by Fonteserè, who had little help from the yet unknown student of architecture, the now renowned Antoni Gaudí, is artistically the most sumptuous part of the park. Situated at the northern corner, the Gran Cascada, or the Cascada Monumental is a baroque gem inspired by Rome's Trevi Fountain. Split in two levels, the cascade is constructed with crab pincers, one at each side, representing the stairs to the central podium. Up front, the sculpture of Venus erects from an open clam, flanked by Naiads; a creation of Venanci Vallmitjana, the elaborate sculpture was carved from white marble.



Picture 32 The Cascade fountain, designed by Josep Fonteserè and Antoni Gaudí

On the pediment of the arch, surrounding the fountain, deities emerge. Up above stands the impressive chariot of Aurora, overlooking the pond packed with griffons. On the side, a gigantic stone mammoth invites to the city zoo, taking care of around 7000 animals. Nearby, Josep Amargós designed the Greenhouse, or the Hibernaculum, in iron and glass, and adjoined it to Fonteserè's iron, wood and brick Umbraculum, housing subtropical species. As another piece of Domenech i Montaner, the Three Dragons Castle is located on north, and showcases a style exemplary to the early Modernism, heavily influenced with Moorish architecture. Since 1887, the building houses the Zoological Museum. Geological exhibitions, being a part of the Natural Science Museum, are held at the neoclassical building of the Martorell Museum.

Refined with artwork and made into a slice of scientific heaven, the park welcomes dreamers, lovers and loners. On the right side of the Three Dragons Castle, L'Hivernale is created as a winter garden for adorers of jazz. As an attribute to the Modernism, Josep Amargós designed a pavilion and constructed it with cast iron and glass, referencing, thus, the Eiffel Tower. The turtles and the fish adorn the lake, swashing lovably among the sweethearts. The banana trees sway. The bandstand, Glorieta de la Transsexual Sònia, is a park's most liberal site, built in remembrance of a transsexual murdered there in 1991. The peace, the nature's juices, the art; Parc de la Ciutadella is Barcelona's finest, a mirage in a concrete desert. Savour it with your eyes nearly closed, tucked in cosily on the grass, between the summer crickets.





Picture 33 A detail from the park

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When the rain is cold and there's no one to smile, remember Paris. I was there for Christmas once. Montmartre smelled like chocolate and winter. I held my hat firmly and smoked a cigarette. In a long trench coat, a fine young gentleman was sitting on the stairs, reading *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. With dreamy eyes, he looked west and smiled. And that's how I remember it. Enveloped in fog, cities remain in our thoughts as glass beads; the beads jingle, making the sweetest of tunes. Sun gently flickers in Dubrovnik, trains arrive in Prague through snowstorms, the Venice air flutters with ancient currents, Chicago tastes like strawberry pudding, Perth reflects in the endless water, Barcelona dances in the ring of fire. Sylphlike, wild Barcelona.



Picture 34 University of Barcelona

Barcelona is a lady. She's old and she's gentle, and she's wise. She dreams of summers long gone, and she wears a stinky perfume. She discusses politics over morning newspapers and has strong opinions. When she's alone, late at night, she remembers her lovers; Catalans come to her wrapped up in foam and moonlight. Barcelona sighs and continues on with a shrug, for she is the fairest lady on the coast.

There's no other way of depicting her. Barcelona is to be touched, smelled and kissed. She's to ignite your wildest dreams and make you dance. In August, her streets are festive and tasselled with paper flowers. Overhead the narrow lanes of Gràcia district, the sky is clear and very, very old. At the Eixample, Modernism flirts with Baroque, waving its stone surfaces. Medieval and perky, Ciutat Vella drinks sangria, tipsily singing into the sunset. Golden and intoxicated, the Catalan end of the summer is a feast of architecture, art and culture. It's where dreamers go to stay awake, dancing the night away.





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