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36 Hours in Barcelona



Stefano Buonamici for The New York Times

La Vinya del Senyor is the place to go after a concert.

By STUART EMMRICH
Published: April 26, 2009

IN recent years, the once-gritty neighborhoods of Born, El Raval and Barceloneta have emerged as the new face of [Barcelona](#) — home to some of its best restaurants, bars and designer shops. You wouldn't want to spend your entire time in Barcelona without traveling outside the boundaries of these three vibrant areas, of course, but spending a few well-chosen days among their narrow streets and shadowy alleyways will provide you with a crash course in what's hot now.

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cervecerías that line this historic square.

Friday

5 p.m.

1) RAMBLING ALONG

First things first. Whether it's your first visit to Barcelona or your 10th, you must hit Las Ramblas. Dive into the sensory overload that is this city's most famous avenue, with its [bird](#) markets, flower stalls, street musicians, mimes, overpriced tapas bars and hundreds upon hundreds of people — locals and tourists alike — out for an afternoon stroll. When you have had enough of the crowds (it won't take long), duck into the lovely, palm-tree-dotted Plaça Reial for a restorative break and perhaps an icy caña (draft beer; 2.30 euros, or about \$3 at \$1.35 to the euro) at Karma (Plaça Reial, 10; 34-93-3025-680), one of several

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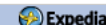
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Slide Show

A Weekend in Barcelona



Map
Barcelona

7 p.m.

2) THE PERFECT SANDWICH?

In 2006, Mark Bittman, writer of the Minimalist column in the Dining section of The New York Times, and a frequent contributor to the Travel section, wrote a review of [Café Viena](#) (La Rambla del Estudis, 115; 34-93-3171-492; www.viena.es), and its flauta d'ibéric d.o. jabugo, which he called the best sandwich he had ever eaten — a simple, salty masterpiece of crispy bread and lightly cured ham. The lines of diners who crowd this tiny restaurant — sometimes two or three deep at the counter — surely agree. The flauta (accompanied by a caña poured from the porcelain and brass tap) is a perfect snack to tide you over until you can have dinner in about four hours. Total cost: about 8 euros.

9 p.m.

3) HIGH ART, LOW COST

World-class musical performances in stunning architectural settings can be found at the renowned [Gran Teatre Del Liceu](#) — more than 150 years old and the survivor of three major fires and one bombing by anarchists — and the [Palau de la Música Catalana](#), which features an over-the-top Catalan Modernist design by Lluís Domènech i Montaner. But more affordable classical [music](#) concerts — in an equally beautiful setting — are at the [Basílica de Santa Maria del Mar](#) (Plaça de Santa Maria; 34-93-3102-390), a lovely and elegant church in Born that dates from the mid-14th century. A recent weekend featured a performance of [Mozart](#) and Haydn by Musica Bohemica of [Prague](#), with tickets at just 20 euros. Afterward, walk across the courtyard to join the stylish crowd gathered at [La Vinya del Senyor](#) (Plaça de Santa Maria, 5; 34-93-310-3379) for tapas and one of its many excellent [wines](#) featured by the glass.

12:30 a.m.

4) HEATING UP, ICING DOWN

South Beach meets Barcelona at the strip of open-air nightclubs along Passeig Marítim de la Barceloneta. With its elegantly appointed space and its inviting daybeds that couples lounge on as they drink the night away, the [Carpe Diem Lounge Club](#) (No. 32; 34-93-22404-70; www.cdclbarcelona.com) has perhaps the highest profile of these beachside boîtes. But [Shôko](#) (No. 36; 34-93-225-9200; www.shoko.biz) seems to have the edge in youth and energy, while the neighboring icebarcelona (Ramon Trias Fargas, 2; 34-93-224-1625; www.icebcn.com), with its promise of a space cooled to minus 8 Celsius (that's 17.6 Fahrenheit; time limit is 45 minutes) has the quirkiest appeal.

Saturday

10 a.m.

5) MARKET RESEARCH

Join what feels like the city's entire population on a morning shopping expedition at the sprawling Boqueria (La Rambla, 91), which has been around, in one form or another, since the early 18th century. If a trip among the hundreds of stalls becomes a dizzying experience, grab a counter seat at the hugely popular tapas spot, Bar Pinotxo (34-93-317-1731), for a brief rest and a late morning bite. (Try the salt cod croquettes.)

11:30 a.m.

6) THE ART OF THE EVERYDAY

There are some superb examples of present-day Catalan art at [Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona](#) (Plaça dels Àngels, 1; 34-93-412-0810; www.macba.es), but the real show is in the adjoining plaza — a lively scene of whizzing skateboarders, young families on weekend outings and dozens of people waiting to ride makeshift go-carts

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fashioned out of unlikely pieces of furniture, from filing cabinets to rocking chairs.

2 p.m.

7) EAT, SHOP, EAT

The museum also provides an excellent jumping-off point for exploring the surrounding neighborhood for a few hours. Have lunch at [Ánima](#) (Carrer dels Àngels, 6; 34-93-342-4912) nearby, where a two-course set lunch — with dishes like a carrot and fresh thyme soup and tuna with pan-fried endives — costs just 10 euros. Afterward, wander the streets of El Raval, where you will find some of Barcelona's most interesting shops and fashion outlets, including one of the city's branches of the famed [Camper](#) shoe store chain (Plaça dels Àngels, 4; 34-93-342-4141). Then, before heading back to your hotel for a rest, stop by the ever-crowded BarcelonaReykjavik bakery (Carrer del Doctor Dou, 12; www.barcelonareykjavik.com; 34-93-3020-921) for its organic treats, like a delicious leek and olive oil bread (7.38 euros).

9 p.m.

8) USING YOUR SENSES

The eight-course Sensations menu at the elegant [Cinc Sentits](#) (Carrer d'Aribau, 58; 34-93-3239-490; www.cincsentits.com) begins with a bracing shot glass of maple syrup, chilled cream, cava sabayon and a layer of rock salt; winds its way through Mediterranean tuna in smoked tomato water and Iberian suckling pig cooked sous vide; before finally ending up with olive oil [ice cream](#) and shattered bread. It's a superb progression of dishes — each accompanied with a well-chosen wine — and a memorable meal that will leave you sated but not stuffed. About 250 euros for two.

1:30 a.m.

9) THE NIGHT'S STILL YOUNG

If you're not ready to call it a night (and few locals are at this hour), head to Dry Martini (Carrer d'Aribau, 162; 34-93-217-5080; www.drymartinibcn.com) for one of its signature drinks and its laid-back crowd. Or, if you want to check out a different kind of night life, walk a few blocks to Dboy (Ronda de Sant Pere, 19-21; www.dboyclub.com), the hottest gay club of the moment, where the shirtless crowd will still be going strong well past 5 a.m.

Sunday

10:30 a.m.

10) PICASSO, THE EARLY YEARS

While the rest of Barcelona is still asleep, probably having gone to bed just a few hours earlier, head to the [Museu Picasso](#) (Montcada 15-23; 34-93-256-3000; www.museupicasso.bcn.es), where you can have much of this sumptuous collection almost to yourself for a while. Entrance is 9 euros, and the museum is open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

12:30 p.m.

11) GATHER ROUND

Every Sunday, the Plaça de la Seu, which fronts Barcelona's imposing [Gothic cathedral](#) in the city's historic center, becomes a stage for aficionados of the sardana. The dancers — mostly women, elegantly dressed in full makeup and jewelry — toss their purses and jackets into the middle of a circle and then join hands as they master the intricate steps (and tiny hops) of this traditional Catalan dance. You'll probably be asked to donate a euro or two, as part of a collection for the band members playing on the cathedral steps.

1:30 p.m.

12) A SEASIDE FEAST

Much of Barcelona seems to head to the seaside neighborhood of Barceloneta for a Sunday stroll along the waterfront. Watch the passing parade from an outdoor table at [La](#)

[Mar Salada](#) (Passeig Joan de Borbó, 58; 34-93-221-2127) — one of the less-touristy restaurants along this busy strip — and have a lunch of excellently prepared calamari, followed by the house specialty, seafood paella, all accompanied by a crisp white Spanish wine. Lunch for two, about 55 euros.

THE BASICS

[American Airlines](#), [Delta](#) and [Continental](#) all have nonstop flights from the New York area to [Barcelona](#) International Airport. Based on a recent Web search, round-trip fares in June start at about \$810. Upon arrival, central Barcelona is about a 20-minute and 30-euro taxi ride (\$40.50 at \$1.35 to the euro) away. For getting around the city, you can't beat the efficient and easy-to-navigate Metro system. Best bet is to get a T-10 card, good for 10 trips, for 7.70 euros.

The sleek, 59-room [Omm](#) (Carrer Rosselló, 265; 34-93-445-4000; [www.hotelomm.es](#)) is home to both an acclaimed restaurant and a happening late-night bar that attracts a healthy sampling of Barcelona's beautiful people. Rates start at about 240 euros. Budget hotels don't get more stylish than the [Market Hotel](#) (Passatge Sant Antoni Abat, 10; 34-93-325-1205; [www.markethotel.com.es](#)). It's hard to find — tell the cab driver it is an alley off of Carrer del Comte d'Urgell, and about a block from the Sant Antoni Market — but when you do, you'll be amazed that rates at this impeccably designed, extremely comfortable hotel start at around 60 euros. Elegance by the waterfront is the calling card of the [Hotel Arts](#), a Ritz-Carlton, with its sweeping views of both the sea and the city (Marina, 19-21; 34-93-221-1000; [www.hotelartsbarcelona.com](#)). On a hot Barcelona afternoon, there is no more refreshing place to revive than at the hotel's pool overlooking the playful [Frank Gehry](#) steel-lattice "Fish" sculpture. Rates start at 325 euros for a double room, but can drop sharply if you opt for a nonrefundable reservation on the hotel's Web site.

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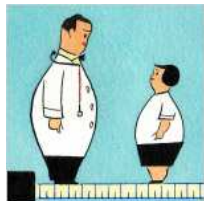
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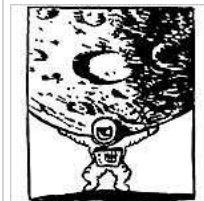
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