**Barcelona: Attractions, Monuments, Interesting Places. What's Worth Seeing?**

**Gothic Quarter and Historic Attractions of Barcelona**

The Gothic Quarter, or Barri Gòtic in Catalan, is the oldest inhabited part of Barcelona. Strolling through its narrow, labyrinth-like streets, you'll come across many buildings from medieval times, and even traces of Roman times. However, not all buildings in the Gothic Quarter are original. Many have been renovated in recent decades. It's also worth keeping in mind that today it's a heavily touristy area - we should be cautious of pickpockets and the prices in cafes and restaurants.

If we want to learn more about the city's history, we can visit the Museum of History of Barcelona (Museu d'Història de Barcelona MUHBA), located at the famous Plaça del Rei square. The museum consists of two main parts. We start with an underground archaeological site with a street from Roman times. It can take up to an hour to explore the entire site, as it covers a relatively large area. Then we move through exhibitions and enter the old royal palace, Palau Reial Major, where we can visit the Chapel of St. Agatha and the monumental Gothic hall with arches - Salón del Tinell. Unfortunately, there's hardly anything else to see inside the palace. Even if we don't plan to enter the museum, it's worth visiting Plaça del Rei square itself!

The most important example of Catalan Gothic is the Barcelona Cathedral. Its construction began in 1298 and lasted until the mid-15th century. The cathedral complex includes a garden, a cloister, and the crypt of St. Eulalia (located under the main altar). For visitors, the surprise in the cloister and garden might be the sight of... 13 white geese. This is a reference to the age at which St. Eulalia was martyred. While in the garden, take a look at the fountain of St. George and visit the museum housed in a historic room used for priestly meetings.

Don't forget to go up to the roof of the temple. Due to its location, it offers one of the best viewpoints in all of Barcelona. While up there, you can walk around a large part of the roof.

Another important temple is the Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi. The interior of the basilica was destroyed in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War (the church institution was associated with General Franco's regime). After the civil war, the basilica was restored. Unfortunately, many elements were lost forever, and today we can only see their reproductions. An example is the rose window above the main entrance (one of the largest in the world).

Entry to the basilica is paid. It's possible to take a guided tour during which you'll see the treasury and climb the tower, which offers one of the best views of the city. The cost of the tour is 10€.

Plaça Sant Jaume is considered the most important square in the Gothic Quarter. Two important buildings stand here:

• Casa de la Ciutat, the historic city hall - its neoclassical façade alone is impressive, but the real treasures are inside, where you'll find the incredible Saló de Cent (Hall of the Hundred), the Queen Regent's Room (where city council sessions are held), Saló de Cròniques (with beautiful paintings), Gothic decorations, and stairs leading from the ground floor to the upper floor. The interiors of the Barcelona City Hall are breathtaking, and if you have the opportunity, you should definitely visit. The town hall can be visited independently every Sunday from 10:00 to 13:30.

• Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya, a Renaissance palace housing the offices of the Catalan regional government. It used to be open to visitors - before visiting, it's worth checking if it's still possible.

A bit away from the Gothic Quarter is the Basilica of Santa Maria del Mar. This incredible temple was built between 1329 and 1383 and is considered one of the finest examples of Catalan Gothic architecture. It's worth mentioning that guided tours are available inside the church, during which you'll climb to the church's roof and have the opportunity to enter the crypt. The tour lasts 45 minutes. It's worth arriving a little earlier, as the number of places is limited.

**La Rambla and La Boqueria Market**

La Rambla is undoubtedly the most famous promenade in the capital of Catalonia. It stretches for 1.5 kilometers - starting at Plaça de Catalunya and leading to the monument of Christopher Columbus, located near the beach. It's worth mentioning that the Columbus monument also serves as an observation point - from its terrace, you can enjoy views of the sea and the promenade. Roughly in the middle of La Rambla is the famous La Boqueria market. It's one of those places that you must visit while in Barcelona. Inside, you'll find colorful stalls, fresh juices, and delicious Catalan tapas dishes. When inside, remember to watch out for pickpockets.

If you want to try the famous Jamón (ham), you can visit Jamón Experience (address: Rambla de les Flors, 88-94). Inside, besides the museum, there's also a restaurant where you can try a platter of famous ham and have a glass of wine. Prices on-site are high.

Walking along La Rambla, you can easily sense its heavily tourist-oriented atmosphere. Restaurants and establishments along the entire promenade are considered expensive and overhyped. Closer to the sea, you'll encounter more people dressed up as characters from movies or famous personalities, urging you to take a photo. Despite a few drawbacks, it's worth walking along La Rambla at least once and experiencing its unique atmosphere.

**Passeig de Gràcia - Barcelona's Most Luxurious District**

What is Barcelona's most representative street? Everyone may have a different opinion, but most responses will likely point to the famous Passeig de Gràcia, located within the Eixample district.

Walking along this alley stretching from Plaça de Catalunya to Carrer Gran de Gràcia, you'll see many beautiful facades, magnificent lamps, the finest examples of Catalan modernism, and shops of the trendiest international brands. Like the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Passeig de Gràcia is the most expensive street in Barcelona and all of Spain.

**Casa Batlló**

(Passeig de Gràcia, 43)

Casa Batlló is one of Antonio Gaudí's most recognized works. The facade of this building is a true work of art, with its diversity and vibrant colors capable of mesmerizing you. If you look closely, you'll see a lying dragon on the roof. The building can be visited, and inside, you'll receive a video guide. It's best to come here shortly after opening; crowds during midday can be unbearable.

**Casa Milà**

(Provença, 261-265)

Another of Gaudí's famous works. From the outside, the building doesn't impress as much as Casa Batlló, but it's worth looking up and admiring the metal balconies and original shapes. The inside is interesting, though. The entire floor showing how the artist designed living space is open for exploration. At the end of the tour, you'll climb to the roof with its characteristic turrets, which appear on many materials advertising Barcelona.

**Other Buildings Worth Seeing along Passeig de Gràcia**

• Casa Lleó Morera (Passeig de Gràcia 35) - a building designed by another master of Catalan modernism, Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

• Casa Amatller (Passeig de Gràcia 41) - a colorful building adjacent to Casa Batlló.

• Casa Mulleras (Passeig de Gràcia 37) - the least modernist of them all. Architect Enric Sagnier, in designing the façade, decided to lean more towards classicism.

These buildings, along with Casa Batlló, were given the collective nickname Illa de la Discòrdia, or "Block of Discord." Why such a designation? All were built in close proximity, each standing out and differing architecturally from the other buildings in the area.

**Sagrada Família - Barcelona's Most Popular Attraction**

The Sagrada Família is Antonio Gaudí's life's work and a successful attempt to transfer the rules of the natural world into a sacred object. The temple has been under construction for over 100 years and is still unfinished, yet it's visited by millions of tourists annually. Ticket proceeds are used for further construction, which is expected to be completed by 2026. You can visit the basilica, but be prepared for long waits in queues. Tickets are purchased for specific time slots. Additionally, it's possible to access the higher floors for a panoramic view (tickets are not the cheapest).

**Palau Güell - a Cheaper, Yet Equally Fascinating Alternative to Casa Batlló and Casa Milà**

On the western side of La Rambla, you'll find Palau Güell (Carrer Nou de la Rambla, 3-5), one of Antoni Gaudí's works. Many tourists are unaware of this place, and this monument turns out to be more interesting to explore than the buildings along Passeig de Gràcia. The tour begins with the stables, then ascends through a living room where you can listen to music, and continues through daily living and sleeping areas. It's worth noting that the entrance ticket is almost twice as cheap as for Casa Milà or Casa Batlló.