



# A newbie's guide to: **Barcelona** 2023



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Aerial view of Barcelona (pictured left)



Park Güell (pictured below)

# Barcelona at a glance

You probably know this — because you're moving here for a reason — but Barcelona is a hell of a city.

So, excellent choice!

Before we dive into it, please make sure you're keeping an eye on the latest [COVID-19 restrictions and updates](#) and stay safe!

Now, where were we...

As big cities go, Barcelona's bang-to-buck ratio is probably one of the best you'll ever find. Way more laid back than NYC, London, or Paris, Catalonia's buzzing capital offers the kind of quality of life that dreams are made of.

**What do we mean by that?** It's affordable and walkable. It's got great weather and incredible food, lots of good people, easy access to mountains and beaches in just an hour or two... See where we're going with this? And why we're so excited for you right now?

Distilled from the wisdom of expats in Barcelona, here's your guide to easing your way into life in your brand new home city. From the moment you land, up to the point where you make your first friends and don't need us anymore.



# Getting started

## What to expect when you land

The weather in Barcelona is probably one of the reasons some people move here in the first place. With its mild winters and hot Mediterranean summers, this city will make sure that you don't have to think about the weather too much. Depending on the time of the year you get off your flight to Barcelona, you'll either be warm, pretty warm, not very cold, or damn hot.

No, it's not consistently warm all year round. Spring and autumn can get a bit rainy. But even at its chilliest in winter (December - February), the temperature hardly ever dips below freezing. If you're landing in winter, you'll be glad you brought:

- A lightweight, rainproof coat
- Some layering options (cardigans, hoodies)
- Comfortable and fairly sturdy walking shoes and/or boots.





Aerial view of Barcelona street (pictured left)

# Arrival

So now you've landed at [El Prat airport](#) (BCN), Europe's seventh busiest airport and Spain's second after Madrid-Barajas. The cheapest way into the city from the airport is the [Aerobus](#), a comfy bus that takes you to Plaza Catalunya and Plaza España, two very central points in Barcelona.

Conveniently, Barcelona is also one of those places where the airport is close to the city: just 12 km (7.5 mi) from the center.

A taxi into town will set you back about 25 EUR, so if you have a lot of luggage, it makes sense to grab a taxi. We suggest you avoid the metro for this—there's no direct connection, so it takes too long.

Barcelona is one of Europe's sunniest cities with 2,524 hours of sunlight a year. Enjoy responsibly—sunscreen is a must.

The worst-case weather scenario you can expect is intense heat. During summer (June - August) heatwaves, temperatures can soar beyond 35° C / 86° F in the shade, in which case make sure to stay cool and hydrated.

Stuff you'll need:

- Sunglasses
- Water bottle
- Light, comfortable shoes
- Light, loose clothes
- Seriously consider a hat for very hot, sunny days



Barcelona Metro  
(pictured  
left)



# Get connected

You'll probably need to post an Instagram story as soon as you've arrived. Your the family must know you're safe, after all. For your phone and data needs, these carriers come recommended:

- ☎️ Vodafone
- ☎️ Yoigo
- ☎️ Orange

# Getting around

Barcelona is wonderfully walkable. You can get from Eixample to Poblenou (more about them later) or the beach in about 40 minutes.

Whichever neighborhood you move to will have everything you'll need to live comfortably, so you won't necessarily have to move around a lot. But there's so much to see and do that you'll probably want to. And getting around is fabulously easy.



You won't need to drive, although a bike, motorbike, or e-scooter will come in very handy if you're into that sort of thing.

- The [Metro](#) is smooth, reliable, well-connected, and air-conditioned. It's fairly safe, but always be careful and watch out for pickpockets.
- Taxis are very affordable. 10 EUR gets you from one side of Barcelona to the other.
- [Cabify](#) and [FreeNow](#) work in Barcelona, and [Uber](#) is back now too.
- You can rent scooters with [Cooltra](#) and [Yego](#).
- Many people buy electric scooters, skateboards, or bikes to get around. There are plenty of bike lanes.

# Finding an apartment

We're going to assume that you've got yourself a temporary stay lined up while you look for something more long-term.

The good news is that renting an apartment in Barcelona is fairly easy compared to cities like Paris or Berlin. When you're renting, you'll be asked to provide a payslip, your NIE number, and personal information to make sure you're legit. The commission you'll have to pay depends on the agency you use. Also, expect to pay a deposit of a month's rent. Utilities vary widely and are paid on top of the rent.

Good places to start your apartment search:

- [Idealista](#)
- [Spotahome](#)

If you prefer to share an apartment, either to cut costs or just for the company, [Badi](#) is a great place to find roommates.





# Neighbourhoods

Barcelona's neighborhoods are all unique and bursting with character, so it'll be no surprise if you won't know which one to make your home. We can't make the choice for you, but we recommend you go for a centrally located apartment that's close to your place of work.

So you don't get overwhelmed by options, here are our top picks for areas to consider:

**Eixample.** This area is what you probably imagine when you think of Barcelona. It's close to everything and simply beautiful with its iconic gridlike layout and world-famous landmarks. And you'll never be more than a few steps away from a great restaurant or bar.

**Gràcia.** Just above example, this is a lovely traditional neighborhood with a village feel.

**El Born/Gotico/Raval.** An affordable option because there's not much natural light due to the narrow streets. Home to a lot of students.

**Sarrià.** A bit more out of the way, this is where well-off locals (with families) live when they still want to be close to the city.

**Poblenou.** Industrial, hipster, startup-y. And right by the beach!

# Groceries & supplies

Regardless of where in Barcelona your new fridge is, you'll need to fill it with groceries sooner or later.

- [Mercadona](#) is a family-owned chain of supermarkets that makes a great go-to for your daily needs. They don't like unnecessary packaging.
- [El Corte Inglés](#) is a fancier option.
- [Lidl](#) is good for buying stuff in bulk.

You'll find small local stores on pretty much every corner.

If you like shopping for more than just food (or maybe you packed light), Barcelona will deliver. Many of the world's most popular clothing brands are Spanish (Zara, Pull&Bear, Stradivarius, Mango...) and you'll see them everywhere, most notably in Gran Via, Plaza Catalunya, and Portal de l'Àngel. Also...

- [Amazon.es](#) is always there for you when you feel like shopping from the comfort of your home.
- Far from being just for groceries, El Corte Inglés has clothing, footwear, accessories, bedding, furniture, beauty products... you get the idea.
- [FNAC](#) is the top choice for electronics.





# Bank account

Getting a traditional bank account can be a little bit of a hassle as an expat, but it's nothing you can't handle. [Sabadell](#) and [La Caixa](#) are great banking options.

[Revolut](#) and [N26](#) are also both available in Spain if you prefer to go the challenger bank route.



## Healthcare

First things first: In a medical emergency, call 112.

You're not guaranteed to come across English-speaking emergency services staff, so find a friendly local to help you if you can.

If you have a work contract in Spain, you will get access to the public health system, which is very high quality. Without a contract, you'll need private insurance.

# Living comfortably

Once you have the basics down, you'll be looking for some creature comforts. Of course, your actual costs are going to depend on your personal preferences and lifestyle. But in general, the cost of living in Barcelona is [lower than in many other major European cities](#).

Based on our experience, here are some rough numbers to help you understand how much you can expect to be spending in Barcelona. (Your mileage may vary!)

- Around 1,200 EUR will get you a centrally located apartment for one. 2,000 EUR gets you a very nice apartment with two or more bedrooms.
- 600 EUR gets you a private room in a good location.
- The cost of a night out starts at ~25 EUR. If you go somewhere fancier, think more along the lines of 50/person.
- Drinks in bars are around 10 EUR. Expect to pay 7 EUR for craft beer and 4 EUR for a regular beer.
- Entry to clubs is often free, but 15–20 EUR is also normal. Drinks at clubs are around 13 EUR.
- A single Metro ticket is 2.40 EUR. Depending on how much you're planning to travel, you can get travel cards valid for varying numbers of journeys.





## Fitness

Odds are you've never seen this many CrossFit gyms in your life. One of those will cost you upwards of 100 EUR/month. Regular gym memberships start at 20 EUR for students and can go up to 80-100 EUR (Metropolitan, DIR)

If you're not a gym bunny or just want to save a few bucks, Barcelona is the perfect place to bike, run, and rollerblade your way to peak physical fitness. There's calisthenic/gymnastic equipment (bars etc.) on La Barceloneta, the street that runs along the coast. It's also a great place for a walk or a run.



## Leisure activities

If you're the outdoorsy type, Barcelona will knock your socks off. No, seriously—think of an activity you're into: going to the beach, rollerblading, running, biking, swimming in the ocean, beach volley, a walk in the park? You're probably no more than 20 minutes away from a great place to do it. If you're into football and socializing, there's an app called CeleBreak where you sign up for a 7v7 game and go play with people who share your passion.



Other things we love doing in Barcelona:

- Explore Montjuïc for the scenery, greenery, and museums.
- While we're on the subject, check out the millions of world-class museums in Barcelona.
- We probably don't even need to talk about Gaudí and the Sagrada Família. So we won't.
- Go to an FC Barcelona match. It's safe to say that life here revolves around this team.
- Don't miss Las Fiestas de Gràcia, a week-long annual street festival held in August in the district of Gràcia.
- The night between June 23 and 24, the festival of San Juan is celebrated across Spain with music and fireworks.
- Keep an eye out for San Jordi, the Catalan equivalent to Valentine's Day.
- Go see the Spanish Grand Prix of Formula One or MotoGP at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Montmeló.

**Pro tip:** When exploring Barcelona, it's best to steer clear of La Rambla and La Barceloneta in peak tourist season (May to early September). The crowds are huge and overwhelming.

# Groceries & supplies

We really can't stress this enough: Don't miss out on all the incredible food in Barcelona. "The food is good" is definitely the understatement of the year.

Not only is Catalan cooking absolutely delightful, but Barcelona also does international cuisines really well too. Here are some of our top picks that'll be great starting points for your journey of culinary discovery.

- **Healthy food:** Fit Kitchen, Honest Greens
- **Mexican:** Gonzalez Co
- **Argentinean:** Chalito, Pizza Luna
- **Spanish:** La Pubilla
- **Fancy:** Tickets, Disfrutar, Red Fish, Picnic, Dos Palillos
- **Meat:** Pork
- **Tapas:** Dos Palillos, La Flauta, Bar Cañete
- **Pizza:** Parking Pizza
- **Asian:** Hawker 45
- **Ramen:** Koku Kitchen, Ramen-ya
- **All around cool:** El Nacional
- **Sushi:** Futami (and Rainbow for cheap, buffet-style sushi)
- **Burgers:** La Central, Goiko Grill.
- **Cafés and working spaces:** Satan's, the lobby in Casa Bonay, the basement floor at Honest Greens is great too.

Tipping is not expected, but you can leave a couple of euros if you were really happy with the service. In fancier places, you can tip 5-10%.

Booking a table for dinner isn't usually necessary, except for fancy or particularly cool restaurants.

## THE BEST COFFEE IN TOWN

Got high standards for your brew? Barcelona is definitely a coffee kind of city, so singling out the best is an impossible task. To start, check out [Roast Club](#), [Satan's](#), [Onna's](#), [Nomad Coffee](#), and [Honest Greens](#).

And take a look at [this map](#) of third-wave coffee places.





# Nightlife

Like with the food, you'll be spoilt for choice when deciding how to spend a memorable night out.

- [Robinson's](#): A bar/club on the fancy/cool side
- [El Nacional](#): Touristy but beautiful
- [Dow Jones](#): NASDAQ-themed (drinks change prices based on supply and demand)
- [Paradiso Bar](#): Speakeasy, listed among the best 50 bars in the world
- [Dr. Stravinsky](#): Also among the best 50 bars in the world
- [Negroni Cocktail Bar](#)
- [Bier Cab](#), [Fabrica Moretti](#), [Brew Dog](#), or [Beer Garage](#) for beers
- [Gatsby](#): Cool drinking place with a 30's vibe
- [El Quilombo](#): Fun place, you can sing in front of the crowd
- [La Taberna](#): Cheap place with live music
- [La Ovella Negra](#): Cheap and full of students, fun place to watch games
- [Clubs](#): [Bling Bling](#) (fancy), [Sutton](#) (fancier), [La Fira](#) (Latin), [Arena](#) (LGBT+), [Robinson](#), [Apollo](#) (events), [Razzmatazz](#) (bizarre, student), [Brunch In The Park](#) (electronic music, during the day)

# Making friends

On the friendliness and laid-backness spectrum, you could very loosely, and at the risk of generalizing, place Catalans somewhere between Germans and South Americans. Meaning, you shouldn't have much trouble making friends, but it's likely you'll have to kick things off yourself. Learning the language definitely helps with getting on the locals' good side.

If you're single and ready to dive into the local dating pool, meeting people works the same here as anywhere else: at clubs, bars, meetups, and—of course, because it's 2021—dating apps.

## Pro Tips:

- Try to join [Soho House](#), a members' club and home away from home for creatives.
- Tread carefully when and if the conversation turns to Catalan independence. It's a difficult subject and you're probably better off doing more listening than speaking.
- On a similar note, Catalan culture  $\neq$  Spanish culture. They're not the same thing.
- Go to meetups, join expat groups, or do volunteer work.
- Dancing and cooking classes are other great ways to meet both locals and other expats.



# The language

As the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona recognizes both Catalan and Spanish as its official languages. Catalan is dominant in offices and schools, and you'll hear and see it wherever you go.

# Travel in and out of the country

We've established that Barcelona is an amazing place to be. But it's also tantalizingly close to countless other European treasures.

- [El Prat Josep Tarradellas Airport](#) is a hub for Level and Vueling and a focus city for Air Europa, EasyJet, Norwegian Air Shuttle, and Ryanair, so it's well-connected.
- [Trainline](#) is a great way to book train tickets to loads of destinations in the country and internationally.
- Car-sharing apps like [Getaround](#) (previously Drivy) and [Ubeeqo](#) let you rent a car by the hour.

All this means that day trips and weekend getaways are practically mandatory. There's really no excuse not to head out and explore.

Just to whet your appetite, a handful of the best nearby destinations:

- Costa Brava, Catalonia's absolutely stunning coastal region. Think fresh seafood, gorgeous beaches, lush greenery.
- Girona with its medieval walls and picturesque streets is only forty minutes away by train.
- Neighboring Andorra is good for a ski trip.
- Montpellier in the South of France is brimming with history and culture.



# Miscellaneous observations

Here are some various tips, tricks, and observations about life in your new favorite city on the planet.

- Barcelona is very **LGBTQI**-friendly. Pride Barcelona is one of Europe's biggest pride celebrations, with more than 250,000 people attending every year. People are very open to and about LGBTQI relationships to the point where the Eixample neighborhood is sometimes affectionately referred to as Gayxample.
- Although not everyone would classify Barcelona as family-friendly, it definitely can be if you pick a neighborhood a bit further off from the very center.
- Barcelona is generally considered a safe city. But like with every other tourist attraction, pickpockets are common. So be extra careful with your stuff as you navigate the crowded streets.
- Consider investing in a fanny pack to keep your valuables safe. And don't worry—fanny packs are fashionable again!



# Essential Apps

- Cabify/FreeNow
- Deliveroo
- Glovo
- Uber Eats
- Google Maps, of course
- OneFit, which is like Uber for gyms
- Celebreak (football)
- Foursquare (find cool places)
- Yego/Cooltra (scooter rentals)
- Getaround (previously Drivy)/Ubeeqo (rent cars by the hour)
- Trainline (long-distance train tickets)



## Useful links for further discovery on your own

- [Tourist information](#) —you might be a local now, but you should still see all the sights!
- [List of foreign consulates](#) in Barcelona.
- A thorough [guide to healthcare](#) for expats in Spain.
- Check out Barcelona on [The Culture Trip](#) to get inspired.



# Before we go

We've barely scratched the surface. But that's what this guide is meant to do—give you a place to start. The information and advice in the guide has been compiled (and is regularly updated) based on the experiences of real-life expats in Barcelona. We can't guarantee that your experience will be identical or that you'll like everything we recommended in these pages.

Now go out there, stay safe, and make the most of your new home!

Thank you!