

24 hours in
Barcelona

Think the Catalan city of Barcelona is all big shopping streets and overpriced tourist traps? Think again...

WHY EL BORN

Barcelona has way more to offer than just Las Ramblas and football stadium tours. The El Born district is built around the beautiful old town and is currently the hippest place in which to base your stay.

GETTING THERE

Most major airlines fly direct to Barcelona, and if you book early the price will be right. Just make sure you book flights to the right airport. There are three airports and all have names beginning with Barcelona. Don't get caught out booking one hundreds of miles out for cheap flights. You'll be looking for El Prat, also known as BCN.

WHAT TO DO

Whatever you want! If you have your mind on eating, shopping or partying, El Born will have you covered. You're in walking distance of the main centre of Barcelona but you'd never get bored of wandering the tiny picturesque streets around the neighbourhood.

FOR FUN

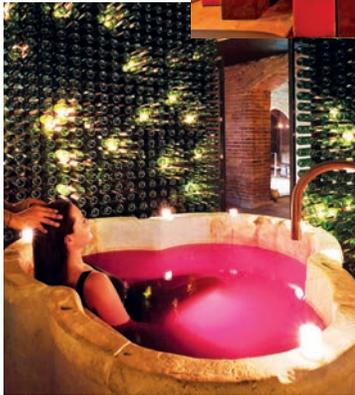
- Set underground in centuries old wells lie ancient baths that transport you to another world. Moving between salt, warm, ice cold and steaming hot baths, this is an experience like no other. You can even avail of a red wine bath, while you enjoy a glass of vino as a therapist massages your head. We can confirm that's as glorious as it sounds. Booking ahead is recommended though as it can be hard to get a space. Airedebarcelona.com
- The neighbourhood is full of fun and quirky shops that are a million miles away from the usual highstreet fare. Check out the Impossible Shop - old restored Polaroid cameras sit alongside cute stationary and unusual homewares. A total treasure trove of gorgeous

things, it's literally impossible to leave empty handed.

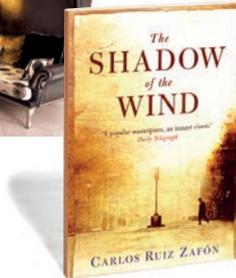
- If you're thinking of hitting Barcelona up soon we recommend planning your trip around the legendary Primavera festival (this year's is on from 31 May to 4 June). The line up can't be beaten and there's no camping so you can get into a bed at the end of the night. It's nothing like an Irish festival - think relaxed sightseeing by day and partying it up big time till the sun rises. Epic. Primaverasound.com

TO EAT

- If brunch is on the agenda you need to check Milk out. Owned by an Irish couple, it feels like you're in someones living room being served the best eggs you could imagine. The cocktails aren't to be missed either.
- If you want to really immerse yourself in the culture venture out of the way and find Can Paixano. A tiny tapas bar that serves endless cava, for a euro a glass. A EURO. Be warned it's absolutely jammed with locals standing back to back. You'll need to battle your way to the counter, point at a few tasty treats and grab a couple of glasses and a bottle of bubbly and find a space to enjoy. Canpaixano.com



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: a home from home in Milk; Aire de Barcelona; ancient baths; Chic & Basic; literary inspo; hotel living; red wine bath? Don't mind if we do, ta! OPPOSITE: Barcelona's fab Gothic Quarter



CULTURE

You're spoiled for choice when it comes to getting your culture fix. The Picasso museum and the Miró are two of the most famous but the Mercat del Born, a former public market is a little gem. It doesn't look like much from the outside but venture in and you'll be treated to an archaeological view of Barcelona in ancient times. Truly fascinating stuff.

WHERE TO STAY

If you want all of the good stuff that comes with a upmarket hotel and none of the unnecessary extras (that cost you an arm and a leg!) then Chic & Basic Born Hotel is the only place to stay. It has everything you would expect from a painfully cool hotel, but the price doesn't add up. So how do they do it? Well the name kind of gives it away. They keep it basic and yet still incredibly chic. So

you get the gorgeous room, luxury toiletries, amazing location and loads of stuff you wouldn't have thought of like a slick common area where you can help yourself to endless Nespressos and bottled water. What they don't waste their time with is costly extras that are designed to add up. So there's no room service, pool, or numerous staff hovering.

The staff should get a special mention though. They're super helpful without being pushy or overbearing. When we arrived (pretty late I may add), the girl at the reception asked us what we were here for and what we were interested in seeing, then spent the next 30 minutes with a map in hand showing us exactly where to go and how to get there.

From the restaurants we'd love, to gigs we couldn't miss and everything in between you literally couldn't pay for this kind of insider info. We had trawled countless websites and blogs before arriving but as you'll know if you've done the same - it's all pretty generic and hard to decipher. She basically planned our whole weekend for us and we ended up in tiny cool places we would never heard of otherwise. She was amazing and really made the weekend. They also give you their free guide book in the room which is basically a bible to all things cool in Barcelona that I've since passed on to numerous people. Chicandbasic.com

WHAT ELSE?

If you need any more inspo for a Barcelona trip, pick up *The Shadow Of The Wind* by Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafón. It's a riveting read that can't fail to awaken your interest in this amazing city.

