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Condé Nast Traveller

AN INSIDER'S
GUIDE TO PARIS

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EUROPEAN ESCAPES

**USA
SPECIAL
ISSUE**
FREE INSIDE

**NEW HOTELS &
STYLISH EATING IN**
BARCELONA
SOUTH OF FRANCE
AMSTERDAM
PIEDMONT

**BEST BRITISH
HOUSES**
TO BOOK FOR THE
YEAR AHEAD

**ON HOLIDAY
WITH**
JUDE LAW
BELLA FREUD
TONI COLLETTE

ISLAND LIVING

IBIZA ★ CUBA ★ ICELAND ★ MOZAMBIQUE ★ CORSICA



HAPPY COOKING!

FRESH
PROVECHO!



YOUNG AT HEART

CASA GRACIA

In a vast modernist mansion in the swankiest part of town, Casa Gràcia is the vivacious brainchild of five hipster backpackers who set out to create the sort of place they always longed to find. Young travellers check in and out every two minutes, as do families and groovy baby-boomers on round-the-world trips. The reception is on the first floor of a six-storey building (the ground floor is home to chef Paco Pérez's popular L'Eggs restaurant), with original oak parquet, pretty corniced ceilings and arched hallways. All of which serves as a backdrop for designer Pelusa Ruiz's recent overhaul. The big sitting room is filled with battered leather sofas, floppy beanbags and chessboards; an open-plan kitchen produces excellent breakfasts of homemade jam, cakes and pastries, with Spanish classics such as paella and chicken *al ajillo* for supper. At night, the dining room hosts flamenco shows, poetry recitals and film screenings; by day, guests spill onto a terrace shaded by olive and lemon trees planted in vintage fire buckets and lit by strings of multicoloured carnival bulbs. Bedrooms range from dorms to deluxe suites with hot tubs; all have new, if tiny, bathrooms. *Passeig de Gràcia 116 (+34 931 874497; www.casagraciabcn.com)*. Doubles from about £55

HIP & AFFORDABLE

BARCELONA

Style on a budget is still possible to find in the cool Catalan capital. By Tara Stevens



BACK TO THE SIXTIES

CHIC&BASIC RAMBLAS

This funky reinterpretation of 1960s Barcelona opened last year in an unassuming period apartment block just off Las Ramblas. Local design firm Lagranja has worked wonders with the interiors: the big lobby is dominated by a genuine Seat 600 bubble car, and there's a reception desk constructed from retro luggage; just as arresting is the white-on-white colour scheme of the billiards room and library. The hotel's buzziest space is its bright dining room, which has floor-to-ceiling windows on three sides and a surprisingly peaceful pavement terrace. Breakfast is a traditional Catalan affair of charcuterie and cheeses, fresh fruit and yogurt; later in the day, neighbourhood regulars stop by for the good-value menu of chilled soups, grilled fish or Penedès duck, tapas and goldfish-bowl-sized G&Ts. The doors of all 97 bedrooms are decorated with images from the 1960s, including local icons such as flamboyant drag queen José Pérez Ocaña, cult designer Miguel Milá and the city's celebrated football team Barça (a free, two-hour walking tour of the neighbourhood helps to put these characters and events in context). The bedroom interiors pop in jellybean colours – apple, lemon and watermelon – but are otherwise fairly simple. The best have private terraces big enough for an afternoon snooze in the sun; others have small kitchens, should you fancy trawling La Boqueria food market for your supper. *Passatge Gutenberg 7 (+34 933 027111; www.chicandbasicramblashotel.com)*. Doubles from about £60



SERENITY IN THE CITY

HOTEL PRIMERO PRIMERA

Uptown in the smart, leafy neighbourhood of Tres Torres – land of Harley Street-style clinics and foreign embassies – this modestly priced hotel is a great little find. Built as a private home in 1955, it is split into two distinct spaces by a covered entrance inspired by old carriage houses. On one side, there's a wood-panelled reception arranged around a swirling Art Deco staircase, a small gym and a plush sitting room with damask sofas, antique rugs, card tables and a drinks trolley stocked with Grey Goose vodka and Hendrick's gin. On the other is a casual restaurant with oak floorboards, white-painted brick walls, crushed-velvet sofas and leather armchairs. Breakfast time is buzzy, with as many locals as guests helping themselves to dainty rolls stuffed with ham and cheese or smoked salmon, and the butteriest chocolate croissants. Evenings are more clubby, with folk stopping by for salads or platters of *jamón ibérico* and a glass of wine, and there's a candle-lit terrace shaded by giant rubber trees leading to a large garden and plunge pool enclosed by thickets of perfumed jasmine. Unlike the rest of the hotel, the 30 bedrooms tend towards the sparse, with built-in wardrobes and smartly upholstered furniture. Best are the small, cottage-like spaces tucked under the exposed beams of the eaves, with exclusive access to a Mexican-inspired outdoor terrace. *Carrer del Doctor Carulla 25 (+34 934 175600; www.primeroprimer.com)*. Doubles from about £120



FLORAL FIND

PRAKTIK GARDEN

The quirky Praktik Hotels group has given each of its five properties – four in Barcelona, one in Madrid – a different theme: there's Praktik Bakery on Carrer Provença; Praktik Vinoteca, which opens this summer; and in this case a garden. Reception is manned by staff wearing stripy red aprons, and surrounded by tin buckets overflowing with spiky dragon trees, huge Swiss cheese plants and curvaceous calla lilies. An ongoing revamp by local hotshot Lázaro Rosa-Violán (set to continue this year) has so far dramatically improved the first-floor bedrooms which now have dark parquet floors and bathrooms with sleek, marble showers and navy hexagonal mosaics. The halls are papered with eye-boggling vintage circus posters and there's a cosy, open-plan living/dining room with a large table, oak-and-leather armchairs and stacks of glossy magazines. The small kitchen produces simple breakfasts of freshly squeezed juices, artisan pastries and small *bocatas* (traditional Spanish sandwiches). Best of all is the large AstroTurf garden – classier than it sounds – which has smart sun-loungers and dining areas enclosed by Washington palms and thick stands of bamboo, and is scented by planters brimming with herbs and mature orange trees. *Carrer Diputació 325 (+34 934 675279; www.hotelpraktikgarden.com)*. Doubles from about £65



OFF-RADAR RESTORATION

RETROME BARCELONA

Israeli entrepreneur Moti Erdeapel founded the Retrome group of small hotels and apartments in 2005, when – with a limited budget, but good friends in the worlds of art, architecture and design – he created the Colosseum Garden, a retro-inspired B&B in Rome. This Barcelona outpost is in a lesser-known part of the Eixample, close to the spectacular La Concepció market and excellent, off-radar restaurants such as the Mantequería Ravell, a secret dining room above a delicatessen on Carrer Aragó. The fabric of this lavish Art Nouveau apartment building has been meticulously restored, with the original *bigas* (bowed beams), *azulejos* (painted wall tiles) and coloured hydraulic-cement tiling typical of the Modernisme style. Scandinavian furniture (a voluptuous green-felt sofa; an old snooker-table lamp hung over a 1970s ash dining table) adds retro cool. The bedrooms are decorated in geometric wallpaper and there are unique touches such as an enormous cast-iron safe converted into a wardrobe. The best have balconies overlooking the peaceful gardens of a convent. A traditional Catalan breakfast of *pan con tomate* (toasted bread rubbed with ripe tomatoes and drizzled in olive oil) is served in the popular little bar across the street. *Carrer de Girona 85 (+34 931 744037; www.retrome.net/barcelona)*. Doubles from about £60