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The Best **Full-Day Tours**



The Best in One Day



Previous page: An artist captures La Sagrada Família.

This very full day, a “greatest hits” tour, begins with the best of Barcelona’s *modernista* architecture in the morning, is followed by a stroll down the epic Rambla, and ends with the highlights of the *Ciutat Vella*, or Old City. You’ll need your walking shoes.

START: Metro to Sagrada Família.

1 ★★★ kids La Sagrada Família. Antoni Gaudí’s unfinished legacy, the soaring “Holy Family” church, is a testament to his singular vision: the art of the impossible. This mind-altering creation—the best-known, if not necessarily the best example, of *modernisme*—has become Barcelona’s calling card. Begun in 1882, its eight bejeweled spires drip like melting candlesticks, and virtually every square inch of the surface explodes with intricate spiritual symbols. Gaudí was run over by a tram long before it could be finished, and at present it remains only an otherworldly facade. Though many believe it should be left unfinished, a private foundation works furiously to finish the church—now projected for 2026, the centennial of Gaudí’s death.

🕒 1 hr. Mallorca 401. ☎ 93-207-30-31. www.sagradafamilia.org. Admission: 8€ adults. Daily Jan–Mar and Oct–Dec 9am–6pm; April–Sept 9am–8pm. Metro: Sagrada Família.

2 ★★★ kids La Pedrera. Thought by many to be the crowning glory of



La Pedrera is considered one of Antoni Gaudí’s masterpieces.

the *modernista* movement, Antoni Gaudí’s avant-garde apartment building Casa Milà is better known as La Pedrera, or Stone Quarry, for its wavy mass of limestone. The exterior seems carved out of nature: It undulates like ocean waves along Passeig de Gràcia and around the corner onto Provença street. The fascinating roof, what most people come to see, is guarded by a set of warrior-like chimneys that look like the inspiration for Darth Vader. 🕒 1 hr. Passeig de Gràcia 92 (at Provença). ☎ 902-40-09-73 or 902-10-12-12 for advance tickets. www.fundacioaixacatalunya.org. Admission 8€ adults, 4.50€ students; also part of ArticketBCN joint admission. Daily 10am–8pm. Closed: Dec 25–26 and Jan 1–6. Tours in English, Spanish, and Catalan. Metro: Diagonal or Provença.



Detailed carving work on La Sagrada Família.

3 ★★ tapaç 24. The informal tapas bar of acclaimed chef Carles Abellán, who's in the kitchen at Comerç 24, is a good-looking pit stop just off Passeig de Gràcia. Grab a snack or lunch of tantalizing small bites with big flavors, and wine and cava by the glass. *Carrer Diputació, 269.* ☎ 93-488-09-77. \$\$.

4 ★★★ Casa Batlló. The centerpiece of the so-called “Block of Discord,” Casa Batlló owes its extraordinary facade to Antoni Gaudí, who completed a remodeling in 1906. Thought to represent the legend of Saint George (patron saint of Catalonia) and his dragon, the house glimmers with fragments of colorful ceramics, while the roof curves like the blue-green scales of a dragon's back, and balconies evoke Carnival-esque masks or menacing monster jaws. The sinuous interior, full of custom Gaudí-designed furniture, is similarly stunning (though tours are unexpectedly pricey). ⌚ 30 min. *Passeig de Gràcia, 43.* ☎ 93-488-06-66. Admission 17€ adults, 14€ children and students, free for children under 5. Daily 9am–8pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

The “dragon's back” atop Casa Batlló.

5 ★★ Casa Amatller. Puig i Cadafalch, a Gaudí contemporary, created this brilliant house—the first building on the Manzana de la Discòrdia block of Passeig de Gràcia—in 1900. It has a medieval-looking, ceramics-covered facade, topped by a distinctive Flemish-inspired roof and beautiful carved stone and ironwork of themes related to the chocolate business and hobbies of the original owners.

⌚ 10 min. *Passeig de Gràcia 41.*

☎ 93-488-01-39. Ground floor open to public Mon–Sat 10am–7pm. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.

6 ★ Casa Lleó Morera. This gorgeously ornate corner house (1905), the final member of the Block of Discord triumvirate, is the work of Domènech i Montaner, who designed El Palau de la Música Catalana and Hospital Sant Pau. Especially appealing when illuminated at night, the building is now home to the upscale leather-goods purveyor Loewe, which lamentably destroyed a good part of the lower facade and sumptuous interior ground floor. *Passeig de Gràcia 35.* Except for the Loewe store, the house cannot be visited. Metro: Passeig de Gràcia.





Fresh flowers are for sale daily on La Rambla.

7 ★★★ **kids** La Rambla.

Barcelona's great strolling boulevard is the centerpiece of life in the Catalan capital. It throbs with activity, as crowds at all hours of the day file past vendors, food markets, cafes, and historic buildings (in the evening, the lower parts can get a little sketchy). Subdivided into five separate ramblas, each of different character and attractions, are a lively succession of newspaper kiosks, fresh flower stands, bird sellers, and crowd-friendly human statues (mimes) in elaborately conceived costumes and face paint. About halfway down the boulevard,

to the left as you face the port, is the Plaça Reial, a grand square with cafes, palm trees, arcades, and lampposts designed by *modernista* master Antoni Gaudí. 🕒 30 min.

Begin at Plaça de Catalunya. Metro: Plaça de Catalunya.

8 ★★★ **kids** Mercat de La Boqueria.

Europe's largest and surely most dynamic food market, this Catalan classic is the foundation of Barcelona's fascination with food. Wander among the more than 300 stalls and several small bar/restaurants to see and smell an amazingly lively gastronomic scene: the slicing,

Top Attractions: Practical Matters

ArticketBCN Discounts: With a single ticket (www.articketbcn.org) you can visit seven top art museums in Barcelona, including the Museu Picasso, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC), Fundació Joan Miró, and the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA). Purchase the ticket (20€; good for 6 months) at individual museum ticket offices, the Plaça de Catalunya Tourist Information Office, branches of Caixa Catalunya bank, or by phone or online with Tel. Entrada (☎ 902-101-212 or 34-93-326-29-46 from abroad; www.telentrada.com).



Mercat de La Boqueria is a Barcelona institution.

dicing, and selling of fresh fish, meats, produce, and more. Keep an eye out for bolets and ceps (wild mushrooms), massive prawns, eels, and octopus. The colorful bounty is a testament to the fertile region and Catalans' desire for the freshest and tastiest foodstuffs available. 🕒 30 min. *La Rambla* 91–101.

☎ 93-318-25-84; Mon–Sat 8am–8pm; Metro: Liceu.

9 ★ **Café de la Ópera.** A Barcelona institution, this 1929 Belle Epoque cafe facing the Rambla and opposite the Teatre Liceu opera house is a low-key, Old-World spot during the day and a bar that occasionally gets much more animated late in the evening, especially if groups of fun-loving gay and bohemian patrons stop by. Good pastries and desserts. *Rambla* 74.

☎ 93-317-75-85. \$.

10 ★★ **Catedral de Barcelona.**

The cathedral, the focal point of the Old City and a splendid example of Catalan Gothic architecture, was begun in 1298 but largely completed in the 14th and 15th centuries. Don't miss the carved choir and surprisingly lush cloister—a welcome oasis in the midst of the Medieval Quarter with its pond, magnolias, orange and palm trees, and white geese. 🕒 45 min. *Plaça de la Seu* s/n. ☎ 93-315-15-54. Free

Café de la Ópera is an old-school spot, perfect for a midday snack or a late-night drink.





The Museu Picasso holds 2,500 paintings and sculptures.

admission to cathedral; museum 1€. Elevator to roof: 10:30am–1:30pm and 5–6pm, 2€. Global ticket for 1–4:30pm guided visit to museum, choir, rooftop terraces, and towers, 4€. Cathedral daily 9am–1pm and 5–7pm; cloister museum daily 10am–1pm and 4–6:30pm. Metro: Jaume I.

11 ★★★ Museu Picasso. Pablo Picasso was born in southern Spain, but he spent much of his youth and early creative years in Barcelona on his way to becoming the most famous artist of the 20th century. The museum is the largest collection of his works in his native country: 2,500 paintings and sculptures, many of them early works, including several from his blue period. The highlight of the collection is *Las Meninas*, a series of 59 interpretations of Velázquez's masterpiece. The Picasso museum occupies several exquisite 15th-century palaces on a lovely pedestrian-only street lined with medieval mansions. 🕒 1 hr. **Montcada 15–23.** ☎ 93-319-63-10. www.museupicasso.bcn.es. Admission 6€ adults, 4€ students and those under 25, free for children under 16. Admission part of ArticketBCN. Free

admission first Sun of every month. Tues–Sat 10am–8pm; Sun 10am–3pm. Metro: Jaume I.

12 ★★ Santa Maria del Mar. A stunning 14th-century Catalan Gothic church that's neither opulent and jewel-encrusted nor home to a fabulous art collection. Instead, it's a simple and solemn, but wholly inspired, space—the kind of place about which architects understandably wax poetic, with perfect proportions in its three soaring naves, wide-spaced columns, and handsome stained-glass windows. 🕒 15 min. **Plaça de Santa Maria.** ☎ 93-215-74-11. Free admission. Mon–Sat 9am–1:30pm and 4:30–8pm, Sun 9am–2pm and 5–8:30pm. Metro: Jaume I.

13 ★★ La Vinya del Senyor. A hip little wine bar with much-coveted tables on a terrace at the lovely square across from Santa Maria del Mar, it features an excellent selection of a 100 or so wines from across Spain, including two dozen by the glass, as well as Spanish ham, salami, and cheeses. **Plaça de Santa Maria, 5.** ☎ 93-310-33-79. \$\$.

The Best in Two Days



After a very full first day in Barcelona, it's time for a more leisurely pace. Begin the day in the Gothic Quarter to get a feel for the city's ancient foundations before moving on to enjoy the revitalized waterfront, which since the 1992 Olympics has been a popular outdoor leisure destination. Stroll along the harbor, stop for lunch in the beachside district of Barceloneta, and hit the sands in the afternoon for sunbathing or a sunset cocktail, topped off by dinner at the new harbor, Port Olímpic. **START: Metro to Jaume I.**

1 ★★ kids Conjunt Monumental de la Plaça del Rei.

In one of the old quarter's most handsome squares, the stately Plaça del Rei, hemmed in by a remaining section of the old Roman city walls, are the fine **Museu d'Història de la Ciutat**—where the main attraction is underground walkways over the exposed foundations (1st c. B.C. to 7th c. A.D.) of Barcino, the ancient city of the Romans and Visigoths—and the Palau Reial Major, an 11th-century royal palace and the residence of the Kings of Catalonia and Aragón. According to legend, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella received Columbus here after he returned from the New World. ⌚ 1½ hrs. **Plaça del Rei s/n.** ☎ 93-315-11-11. www.museuhistoria.bcn.es. Admission 4€ adults, 2.50€ students, free for children under 16. June–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–8pm; Oct–May Tues–Sat 10am–2pm and 4–8pm; year-round Sun 10am–3pm. **Metro: Jaume I.**



Portrait bust of the Roman Emperor Nerva at the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat.

3 ★★ kids Museu Marítim.

Barcelona's seafaring past comes to life in this rich maritime museum, located in the Reials Drassanes, or former Royal Shipyards, which includes a glorious replica of a massive 16th-century vessel, the *Galeria Reial*. The medieval shipyards, a collection of evocative arches, columns, and vaults that was once at water's edge and today remains magnificently intact, is where the kingdom's ships were constructed, repaired, and dry-docked. ⌚ 1 hr.

Av. de les Drassanes s/n.

☎ 93-342-99-20. Admission 6€ adults, 3€ children 7–16. Daily 10am–7pm. **Metro: Drassanes.**

See relics from Barcelona's seafaring past at the Museu Marítim.



2 ★★ Mesón del Café. This tiny 100-year-old place is probably my favorite cafe in the world. Locals drop in at all hours for superb *café con leche*, *café solo*, *cortado*, or a mean *picardía* (coffee with layers of condensed milk and whiskey). And while the coffee's great, there's something just ineffably cool about the place. **Llibreteria, 16.** ☎ 93-315-07-54. \$.



View marine life galore at the Barcelona Aquarium.

4 **kids** Monument à Colom.

Though this monument to Christopher Columbus, built in 1888, has him pointing the wrong direction to the New World, it's a focal and meeting point, dividing the lower end of the Rambla from the waterfront. An elevator takes visitors inside to a mirador for nice panoramic views of the harbor.

🕒 30 min. Portal de la Pau s/n.

📞 93-302-52-24. Admission 2.40€ adults, 1.40€ children 4–12, free for children under 4. June–Sept 9am–8:30pm; Oct–May 10am–6:30pm. Metro: Drassanes.

5 **kids** ★★ L'Aquàrium de Barcelona. At Port Vell (the old port), and across the Rambla del

The Christopher Columbus monument.



Mar, a stylish drawbridge, is Europe's second-largest aquarium, with 21 glass tanks featuring different marine habitats. The highlight is a long, glass-enclosed tunnel, which produces the effect of fish, eels, and sharks swimming around and over wide-eyed visitors. 🕒 1 hr. Moll d'Es-panya-Port Vell. 📞 93-221-74-74.

www.aquariumbcn.com. Admission 15.50€ adults, 12.50€ seniors, 10.50€ children 4–12 and students, free for children under 4. July–Aug daily 9:30am–11pm; Sept–June Mon–Fri 9:30am–9pm, Sat–Sun: 9:30am–9:30pm. Metro: Drassanes.

6 ★ **kids** Moll de la Fusta/Port Vell/Barceloneta.

Moll de la Fusta, a very popular place for a paseo, or stroll, is a boardwalk and series of esplanades along Passeig Colom and the old harbor, beginning at the Columbus statue at the bottom of La Rambla and stretching to a giant Xavier Mariscal sculpture of a playful crayfish and colorful Pop-Art work, *Cap de Barcelona*, by the American artist Roy Lichtenstein. Continuing past the harbor and along Passeig Joan de Borbó takes you to Barceloneta, a colorful old beachfront neighborhood that got a controversial makeover for the '92 Olympics, displacing many longtime residents. It's still known for its longtime *chiringuitos*, or informal seafood restaurants, which makes it

a perfect place to stop for lunch, especially on weekends. 🕒 45 min.

Metro: Drassanes or Barceloneta.

7 ★★ kids Barcelona's beaches & Port Olímpic. It wasn't long ago that no self-respecting Barcelonan would venture down to the city's beaches, much less dream of wading into the polluted waters. Preparations for the 1992 Olympics dramatically reopened the city to the Mediterranean and cleaned up the urban beaches, vastly improving water quality. Today the long stretches of sand are a playground for city dwellers. The beaches (*platges*) are lined with palm trees, public sculptures, bars and restaurants, as well as paths for biking, in-line skating, and walking. The first major beach is Barceloneta, followed to the north by Nova Icària (the most popular beach, near the Port Olímpic marina and Vila Olímpica district), Bogatell, and Mar Bella (an unofficial nudist beach). 🕒 2 hrs. *Metro: Barceloneta or Ciutadella/Vila Olímpica.*

8 Old City shopping. Dozens of fashion boutiques, bars, and souvenir shops line bustling, pedestrian-only Carrer Ferran, while dark, atmospheric Carrer Banys Nous is home to some of the city's best antique shops. Shopaholics should continue across



Public sculptures can be found along Barcelona's beaches.

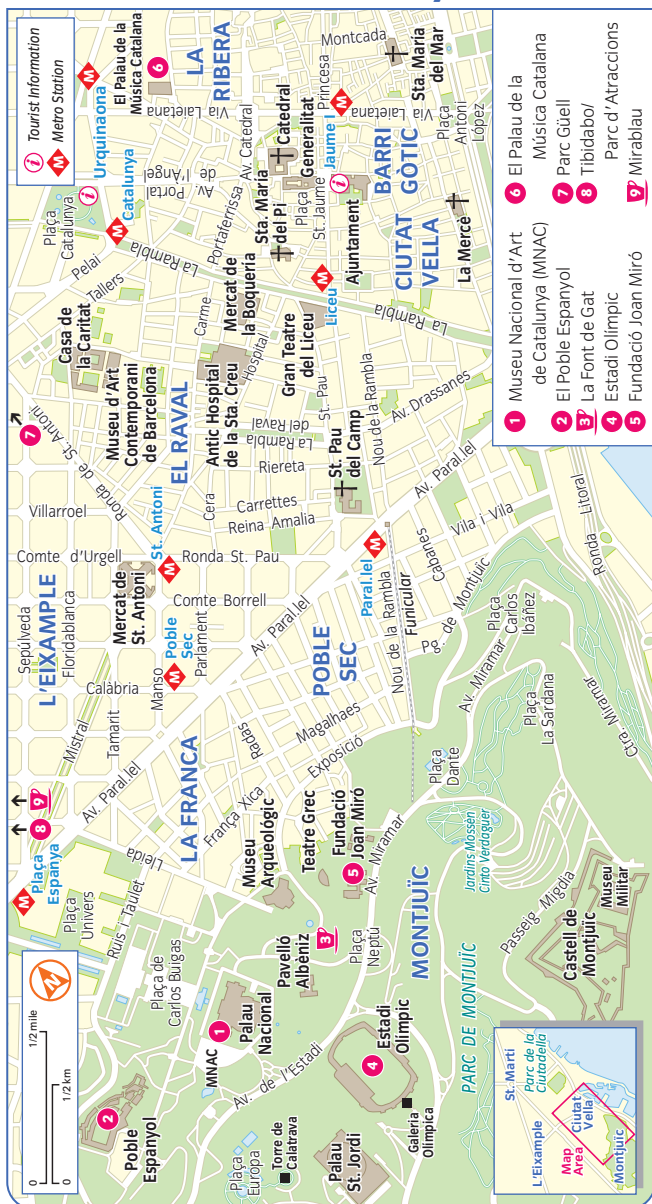
Via Laetana to La Ribera and El Born, site of some of the chicest boutiques in old Barcelona. 🕒 2 hrs. *Metro: Liceu or Jaume I.*

9 ★ Bar del Pi. On one of the prettiest squares in the old city is one of the finest spots in town to linger at an outdoor cafe. Of the several cafes clustered around the square, Bar del Pi is the most traditional. People-watching opportunities abound, and on weekends artists and artisans set up booths in the plaza. *Plaça Sant Josep Oriol.* ☎ 93-302-21-23. \$.

Xavier Mariscal's crayfish at the Moll de la Fusta.





The Best in Three Days



This tour spends the morning on Montjuïc hill before making a brief stop in the Eixample district for one big *modernista* highlight, finishing the day with a gorgeous bird's-eye view of the city from Tibidabo. **START:** Metro to Espanya (though visitors who wish to take the aerial cable car from the port or funicular to Montjuïc should begin at Fundació Miró before working their way down to Poble Espanyol and MNAC).

1 ★★★ Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

At the base of Montjuïc, within the domed Palau Nacional, this museum is anything but a stale repository of religious art. Its medieval collection, which includes Romanesque works salvaged from churches all over Catalonia, is unequalled; many of the superb altarpieces, polychromatic icons, and treasured frescoes are displayed in apses, just as they were in the country churches where they were found. Other highlights are paintings by some of Spain's most celebrated Old Masters, including Velázquez, Ribera, and Zurbarán.

 **1½ hr. Palau Nacional, Parc de Montjuïc.**  93-622-03-60. www.mnac.es. Admission 8.50€ adults, 4€ students and youths 7–21, free for children 6 and under and first Thurs of month (also part of ArticketBCN joint admission). Temporary exhibits: 4.20€. Tues–Sat 10am–7pm; Sun 10am–2:30pm. Metro: Espanya.

A piece from the Museu Nacional D'Art de Catalunya (MNAC).

2 ★ kids El Poble Espanyol.

Erected for the 1929 Barcelona International Exhibition, this ambitious re-creation of a Spanish village presents more than 100 styles of emblematic architecture from across Spain, re-creating individual mansions, churches, streets, and squares, all reduced to scale.

Though some adults and purists find it well-meaning kitsch, it's a fun and instructive place for families to visit and a great introduction to the country's architectural diversity for those who haven't had the opportunity to travel the breadth of Spain and see its whitewashed Andalusian alleyways, small-town plazas, or Renaissance palaces.  **1 hr. Av. Marqués de Comillas s/n (Parc de Montjuïc).**  93-508-63-00. www.poble-espanyol.com. Admission 7.50€ adults, 5.50€ children 7–12, free for children under 7; 15€ family ticket; 2€ guided tours. Mon 9am–8pm; Tues–Thurs 9am–2am; Fri–Sat 9am–4am; Sun 9am–midnight.



Metro: Espanya, then 10-min walk uphill, or bus 13 or 50 from Plaça de Espanya.

3 **La Font de Gat.** This resurrected *modernista* cafe and restaurant, built by the acclaimed architect Puig i Cadafach, is ensconced in gardens of the Montjuïc hillside and makes for a relaxing spot for a coffee or beer, or even an inexpensive fixed-priced lunch. *Passeig Sta. Madrona, 28.* ☎ 93-289-04-04. \$.

4 **Estadi Olímpic.** The setting for the majority of events during Barcelona's hosting of the 1992 Summer Olympics was Montjuïc, including the Olympic Stadium, originally built in 1929 for the World's Fair, and Arata Isozaki's sleek Palau d'Esports Sant Jordi, the indoor stadium that hosted gymnastics and volleyball events (and now also hosts concerts). Nearby are a small sports museum, Galeria Olímpica, and the outdoor pool and diving pavilion, which overlooks the city below. ⌚ 30 min. *Av. del Estadi, s/n (Parc de Montjuïc).* *Metro: Espanya (then take the escalator from Palau Nacional), bus 50 at Plaça d'Espanya, or Funicular de Montjuïc.*

5 **★★ Fundació Joan Miró.** Miró, a resolutely Catalan surrealist painter and sculptor, created a unique, whimsical artistic language—which to the uninitiated may look like colorful doodles—on his way to becoming one of the 20th century's most celebrated artists. In minimalist galleries bathed with natural light are several hundred of Miró's canvases, as well as a wealth of his drawings, graphics, and sculptures. A rooftop terrace and sculpture garden provides lovely views of Barcelona below. ⌚ 1½ hr. *Parc de Montjuïc s/n.*

☎ 93-443-94-70. Admission 7.50€ adults, 4€ students, free for children under 14. Also part of ArticketBCN joint admission. July–Sept Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–8pm; Oct–June Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 10am–7pm; year-round Thurs 10am–9:30pm and Sun 10am–2:30pm. Bus 50 at Plaça d'Espanya; or Funicular de Montjuïc.

6 **★★★ El Palau de la Música Catalana.** Domènech i Montaner's magnificent 1908 music hall is over-the-top ornate but indisputably one of Barcelona's *modernista* masterpieces. The relatively sedate exterior is just a tease of what's inside: a riotous fantasy of ceramics, colored glass, and carved pumice, crowned by an enormous yellow, blue, and green stained-glass dome that looks like a swollen raindrop. It's surely the most exuberant music hall you'll ever see. A daytime guided tour addresses the architecture, but there's nothing like experiencing a concert here. ⌚ 1 hr. *Carrer de Sant Francesc de Paula, 2.* ☎ 902-44-28-82 or 93-295-72-00 for information. <http://home.palaumusica.org>. Tour 8€ adults, 7€ students and

Visit the rooftop terrace and sculpture garden at the Fundació Joan Miró.





Mosaics in the Palau de la Música Catalana.

seniors. Tickets can be bought up to 1 week in advance from the gift shop adjacent to the building. Guided tours daily, every half-hour 10am–3:30pm. Metro: Urquinaona.

7 ★★ kids Parc Güell. Yet another of Gaudí's signature creations, this open-air park on the outskirts of the Eixample district is pure whimsy. Resembling an idiosyncratic theme park, it features a mosaic-covered lizard fountain, Hansel and Gretel pagodas, and undulating park benches swathed in broken pieces of ceramics, called *trencadis*. Gaudí carved part of the park out of a hillside, fashioning a forest of columns like tree trunks. A planned housing development that was never fully realized, the park is home to but a single house, now the Casa-Museu Gaudí, a small museum about Gaudí's life and work (where the ascetic architect lived while working on the project). On clear days, you can see much of Barcelona laid out beneath your feet, including the spires of La Sagrada Família and the twin towers on the beach.

1 hr. Ctra. del Carmel 28.

93-424-38-09. Free admission to park; Casa-Museu Gaudí 4€. Daily

10am–sunset. Metro: Lesseps (then a 15-min. walk uphill). Bus: 24 or 28.

8 ★ kids Tibidabo/Parc d'Atraccions. High above Barcelona is Tibidabo Mountain, which has been a getaway destination for Barcelonans since the early 1800s for its cooler temperatures and panoramic views of the city and the ocean. The historic Tramvia

Casa-Museu Gaudí in the Parc Güell.





Tibidabo amusement park.

Blau, or Blue Tram, carries visitors to an overlook with bars and restaurants. Crowning Tibidabo is the odd juxtaposition of a neo-Gothic church and a 1950s-style amusement park, Parc d'Atraccions (the gentle swing ride is spectacular; it seems to suspend riders over the city). 🕒 1–2 hrs. *Plaça Tibidabo, 3.* ☎ 93-211-79-42. *Parc d'Atraccions, 22€ for unlimited rides, 11€ 6 rides, 9€ children under 1.2m (4 ft.), free for children under 3. Summer daily noon–10pm; off season Sat–Sun noon–7pm. From Plaza Kennedy (Metro: Tibidabo), the tram*

connects with the Funicular Tibidabo, a cable car that completes the trek to the top of the mountain (mid-Sept to the end of Apr, weekends only); round-trip 3.30€.

9P ★ **Mirablau.** This bar perched on Tibidabo Mountain is sedate in the late afternoon and early evening, when it's perfect to relax and contemplate all of Barcelona, stretching out to the sea beneath you. *Plaça Doctor Andreu, 2.* ☎ 93-418-58-79. \$\$.