

Barcelona Tour orientation

This is an overview of our time in Barcelona. This orientation letter contains general information related to our tour, a map of the area around the hotel, and our tour schedule in and around the city.

I strongly suggest you pick up a Barcelona guidebook and familiarize yourself with the city. I like the Rick Steves series. He travels on a tighter budget than I do, but he offers valuable information for seasoned as well as first time travelers.

If you're not a fan of Rick Steves, then take a look at Fodors, Lonely Planet, or Eyewitness Travel. You'll get more out of our stay there if you take the time to read up on it in advance.

Traveling to Spain

We're booked on the high-speed AVE Train from Avignon TGV Station Sunday morning. I know this will come as a great relief that we're not traveling by coach. I decided somewhat last minute to look at rail schedules again and came across this perfectly timed train. We'll depart the ship at a time to be determined by Uniworld. They'll drop us off with more than enough time to get situated on the station platform. When surveyed by the crew as to your departure plans toward the end of the cruise, indicate that you are with the Barcelona Group departing Avignon TGV Station at 8:40 AM.

AVE 9731 05JUN Avignon TGV/Barcelona Sants 8:40 AM 12:34 PM

We're traveling second class, only because I couldn't get enough seats in first. Second class is very comfortable on the High-Speed network on SNCF and RENFE. Seats are assigned, and I will distribute tickets on the way to the station. You'll need your ticket to access the platform. When we arrive at the station, be sure to get your bag from the coach. We're in one train car, number 7. We'll position ourselves at the appropriate position on the platform. These trains keep a tight schedule and there isn't a great deal of time to load, especially with baggage. All the bags are placed at the ends of the cars in the designated luggage area. Stow your large bag in this area, then continue to your seat. It's important not to stop the flow of passengers boarding behind you.

Arrival at Barcelona

We arrive at Barcelona Sants Station a little after noon. We'll be met by a coach and driver who will take us the short distance to our hotel. We'll arrive a little early to guarantee your room will be ready, but you'll be able to drop your bags, then have lunch.

We're meeting our guide, Francesc, at 7:00 PM in the hotel lobby for a stroll on La Rambla in search of Tapas. He'll show us the sights, explain how to order and what we're eating. We'll spend about 3 hours with him before wrapping up the tour back at the hotel.

Catalonia Passeig de Gracia Hotel Gran via del les Corts Catalanes 644 34 932 70 27 35

Our Hotel property enjoys an outstanding location on the south side of the Eixample, just north of the Gothic Quarter. You're steps away from La Rambla, the pedestrian concourse where all the action is.

The hotel is air conditioned, has free wi-fi, hairdryers in the rooms, tea & coffeemaking, and a safe. There's also a work out room and outdoor pool with terrace. Breakfast is included each day beginning at 7:30.

Safety

Barcelona has been designated as one of the safest cities in Europe by the people who track these things. Violent crime may not be a factor, but pickpockets are extremely active. Here are some tips.

1. Don't carry your wallet in a back pocket
2. Don't put phones, cameras on table at cafes
3. Wear your rucksack on the front in touristy areas
4. Always keep bags on your lap at cafes/coffee bars
5. Be wary of any strangers approaching you or touching you
6. Don't participate in street games like the three shell game
7. Be **extra** aware on beaches and in the metro
8. Be **extra** aware when watching street shows
9. Be **extra** aware on La Rambla, Sagrada Familia church, Sants station and in the metro
10. Be **extra** aware in hotel lobbies, at airport bus stops and airport transport

Getting around Barcelona

One of the best metro systems in Europe is literally right outside your door. Barcelona is a walkable city, but if you want to venture out, one of the main subway lines runs on Passeig de Gracia. Ranging in price from €15 (one day) to €35 (5 day), you can purchase an unlimited use pass on Barcelona's public transportation system.

<https://www.tmb.cat/en/barcelona/fares-metro-bus/barcelona-travel-card-hola-bcn>

Uber is not available in Spain, but taxis are numerous and fairly inexpensive. Some take credit cards, but you'll probably want to have enough Euros on hand to pay cash.

Language

Catalan is the first language of Barcelona. Spanish is spoken only grudgingly. Though Catalan seemingly shares some words with Spanish, Catalan is more closely related to Provençal. Rick Steve's "pocket Barcelona" has a section on vocabulary with notes on pronunciation. I looked at other resources, but most seemed to be kindle editions.

If you're bringing a smart phone, Google Translate has an app that will work with Catalan, Spanish, and Portuguese. There is an audible feature as well that helps when the language you're attempting to translate sounds nothing like it looks.

Telephones

Technology changes so rapidly with regard to cellular phone compatibility and costs overseas, that I suggest you contact your carrier to see what options you may have there. I know that Verizon offers a flat fee for 24 hours of service. I have a deep discount on my T-Mobile plan, but calls still cost me by the minute.

Whether dialing from a mobile phone or landline, this is how to call the **US or Canada from Europe:**

Dial 00, Europe's international access code, or enter + from any mobile phone.

Dial 1, the country code for the US and Canada.

Dial the phone number, including area code.

Calling Domestically

If you're calling from one number to another within the same European country (either from a landline or with a local mobile phone or SIM card), simply dial the phone number, including the initial 0 if there is one.

In the US, we're accustomed to seven-digit phone numbers and three-digit area codes, but European phone numbers and calling standards are a bit harder to predict. Phone numbers and area codes can vary in length, even within the same country, and mobile phones utilize their own sets of prefixes.

In some countries, much like at home, you can choose to drop the area code if dialing landline to landline within the same area code, while in other countries, you must dial the full number, even if calling across the street. But I keep things simple by always just dialing the full phone number, including the area code or prefix.

Examples

To call our Barcelona Hotel (tel. 934/702735) from Barcelona Airport, dial 934/702735. To dial it from your connecting airport in Amsterdam, enter 00, then 34 (Spain's country code), then 934/702735.

To call the Barcelona hotel (934/702735) from your US home phone, dial 011, then 34 (Spain's country code), then 934/702735 (the hotel's phone number).

To call the Barcelona Hotel (934/702735) from your US mobile phone (whether you're in Florence or the US), dial +, then 34 (Spain's country code), then 934/702735 (phone number).

Food

Dining is on a much later time schedule that we're used to. Dinner hour begins at 9:00 PM. Outside of McDonalds or KFC, you may not find a restaurant willing to seat you before 7:00 PM. Meal times on the ship will be adjusted earlier to suit what we're ordinarily used to. We have one shared dinner out at a Tapas restaurant and I've added a lunch during one of the tours. Beyond that you're on your own for dinner.

If you're eating in the Rambla or one of the heavily-traveled areas in the city, you'll have no problem finding a menu item you'd like. If you get off the beaten path, you might find the language to be an issue. Get a Catalan language book for this reason, if no other.

Dining is a slow process in Spain and Catalunya. People think nothing of spending two hours over a cup of coffee. You won't be rushed. Other tips...

1. Water is purchased. It's rarely provided on the table
2. No butter. Olive oil is widely used as a substitute
3. Menu del Dia (menu of the day) is a great value. When in doubt, go for it.
4. You'll have to ask for your bill. (La cuenta, por favor)
5. Don't tip like you're at home. Servers make a living wage. 1-2 euro for outstanding service.

Money

The Euro is the coin of the realm. Refer to the section on Money in the cruise letter for more information. To sum up, Debit Cards and ATM Machines are the most efficient means of obtaining Euros overseas. Be sure your bank knows where you're traveling, including connection cities.

Touring

Our tours will be with English speaking guides. Our group is a very manageable size with just 17. We'll walk some, but will have a coach to take us between sites.

I must stress punctuality for all of our tour times. Generally speaking, plan to be available in the meeting place a few minutes before our posted departure time. It will not be possible to hold the coach for late arrivals.

Tipping

Unlike our tours with Uniworld, gratuities are not included. If you like the information provided by your guide, show your appreciation with a tip. I suggest anywhere from 1-3 Euro per tour. It's entirely up to you.

Electrical

You'll need plugs and adapters. Type C, E, and F are the plugs to Current adapters convert from the US to the European current. these, you'll fry your device and/or blow circuits. The adaptor the standard flat 2-prong us plug the round 2-prong plug found in



bring.
Without
converts
Spain.

Your computer, tablet, phone, and battery charger should have a transformer in the power cord. Check the text on the transformer to verify that it will convert the US 120v to the Spanish 220v.

Daily Itinerary

Monday, June 6th

10am-4pm (6 hrs)

Meet in the hotel lobby at 9:45 AM for a Private Walking Tour of the Gothic Quarter, Las Ramblas, Boqueria Market & Historic Neighborhoods. Be sure to wear your comfortable walking shoes today.

The later part of the afternoon is free to spend time on your own. If you are interested in Gaudi, you may want to visit some of his work that we won't have time to see. Our itinerary includes a detailed tour of Sagrada Familia.

Tuesday, June 7th

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (7 hours)

Montserrat & Winery Excursion, in private bus w/ driver

10am-6:00 PM (9.5 hrs)

- This will be a full-day excursion in which we'll ride together throughout the day in a private coach.
- The first stop will be at a small winery, where you will be divided into smaller groups for a tour of the winery and a 4-wine tasting session (1 white, 1 rosé, 2 reds). In total, we will be at the winery for approximately 2 hours.
- For lunch, you'll dine together at a "Masia"-style restaurant. Our guide Francesc is working out the details of this lunch now. More information will be announced the day before.
- After lunch, we'll journey to Montserrat, where we will enjoy a tour of the area surrounding the monastery and basilica.

Wednesday, June 8th

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (7 hours)

Everyone's on their own flight schedule home today. Airlines are now suggesting 3-hour check in times for international flights from Europe to the USA. This might ease somewhat if the US stops the testing mandate for arrivals. For the time being, we'll assume 3 hours.

The drive to the airport is 20-30 minutes. To make it simple, meet me in the lobby for your ride to the airport 3.5 hours before your scheduled flight home. I'll see you off and pay the fare. Let's make a point of speaking the day before to see if the flight details I have for you have changed.

I've tried to provide a good overview of the city with free time for shopping. Adding a lunch was a necessity on our busy full day of touring. If I've missed something or not addressed your questions, please let me know. Email is always best.

Brad Cilley

Northwest Travel Service

425 375 2676

brad@nwtravel.com