

No-Bull BARCELONA Planning Guide

Practical advice for a fun and stress-free trip



By Justine Ancheta, Latitude 41

Barcelona's world-class Mediterranean cuisine, decorous modernist buildings, and soak-in-the-sun lifestyle make it an alluring destination. Does Barcelona's reputation truly live up to the hype? My objective opinion is YES. Whether you're thinking about coming here, or if you've already bought your plane ticket, this planning guide can help you do two things:

It will give you a good idea of what you'll experience when you're here. It's overwhelming when it comes to planning all the details of your trip. You might wonder, *Is it safe to walk around at night? Is it worth taking the tourist bus?* I'll answer those burning questions - plus any details that one-time travel bloggers don't tell you.

It can help you create a working travel budget. What's this trip really going to cost you? We'll create a baseline first -- flight and hotels -- so you can budget out the rest. Then I'll tell you how much transportation, food, and attractions cost. Preparing your budget will save you from coming home broke! And you really *can* travel comfortably and eat like a king in Barcelona. See the last page of this guide to estimate your costs.



But what do I know? Well, let me introduce myself. My name is Justine Ancheta, and I'm a US expat originally from Southern California. I've lived in other Spanish cities like Salamanca and Seville, which is where I met my Sevillano husband. We got married in 2008 and started living in Barcelona together. Since then, we've had 3 kids, and I can't find a better place to raise them. So after over a decade here, I've done plenty of experimenting, adventuring, and gorging myself in the city. And through my experience, I hope to help you have an easy and fun time in Barcelona!



After you read this planning guide, you'll be ready for your Barcelona trip with smooth sailing. So let's do this. Let's go!

Justine

Latitude 41

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Plan When You Want To Come

Step one! Consider Barcelona's weather and events.

January to March is the cold winter, and it's the low season. It's about 8°C / 46°F, but the coldest months are January and February. You can find lots of Christmas activities and holiday markets around Christmas time. January 5 is when you can enjoy the Three Kings' Parade -- when the Magi have an elaborate procession around the city. Many neighborhoods also have their own Three Kings' parade. The holiday season ends on January 6 with Three Kings' Day. Around this season, Barcelona feels lighter with people, and queues are shorter. You won't have to reserve your Sagrada Familia tickets more than a day in advance - unless you want to go during sunset, which is a popular hour!

April to May is when the weather becomes warmer -- temperatures rise to about 15°C - 21°C (60°F - 70°C). It's a great time to visit, but you won't have the hot beach days. Expect possible intermittent cool, rainy days. You can look forward to the festive Andalusian-style Spring Fair of Catalonia and the rockin' concert series Primavera Sound at the end of May. Celebrate the popular book cultural day of the local holiday, *Diada de Sant Jordi*, St. George's Day on April 23.

June isn't sweltering yet, but it's warm, about 20°C / 67°F. Tourist season picks up more, so expect crowds. June 24 is the Eve of San Joan. This is an exciting time - the night comes alive with deafening fireworks and beach bonfires in Barcelona. Summer is when the music scene really kicks off with concert festivals like Sónar, Cruïlla Barcelona, and Barcelona Beach Festival.

July and August are hot and humid, and temps sometimes go up to 35°C / 95°F. You can expect the city population to seemingly double. Take advantage of early mornings to beat the crowds. In August, a lot of shops and restaurants close, except for those that sell to tourists or are in the city center.

September to November is still warm, and the crowds thin out. It's an ideal time to visit! It's around 18°C / 65°F, and heavy jackets aren't needed yet. La Mercè is Barcelona's ancient citywide festival, which usually runs for a few days around September 24, the official feast day. You can expect concerts, workshops, and hundreds of events. Halloween (October 31) is now a popular holiday in Spain. At the same time, Catalans celebrate La Castanyada, a holiday of eating *boniatos* (sweet potatoes) and roasted chestnuts.

December is an exuberant time to visit the [Christmas markets](#). The weather cools down to about 10°C / 50°F and tourism is "low". December 6 and 8 are public holidays, so locals try to use those dates to make long weekend trips. Christmas Day and Boxing Day (December 25 and 26) are holidays. For Christmas activities, check out these posts: [Magical Christmas Activities in Barcelona](#) and [11 Fun Christmas Activities for Kids in Barcelona](#)

How To Arrive

How are you going to get your butt to Barcelona? Barcelona has many options for arrival: airplane, bus, train, cruise ship, and ferry.

By Air

To El Prat Airport

El Prat (BCN) is the most convenient airport destination. It's the hub of international airlines and is located 12 km / 8 miles southwest of the city. **To get from the airport to the city**, expect to pay over €25 euro by taxi. (To convert your currency to euros, [go here](#).)

By train: RENFE is the company that runs the rail system. From the airport, take the **R2 Nord** line. It stops at 3 different points within the city: Estació Sants, Passeig de Gràcia, and El Clot.

By metro: [A single ticket specifically from the Barcelona airport costs €5.15](#), and it connects the airport to the Barcelona metro. You can also [buy the Hola BCN card](#), which is a travel card that includes unlimited public transportation travel. (Read more about the Hola BCN card in the "Transportation" section.)

Another convenient way from the airport to the city is *by Aerobus*, a private bus that stops at several destinations in the center, and vice versa. One-way single tickets cost €5.90, and round-trip tickets are €10.20. Departure points are from Terminal 1 and Terminal 2. See the helpful videos on how to take the Aerobus and also [buy your Aerobus ticket ahead of time on the website](#).

To Girona Airport

Another nearby airport is the **Girona Costa Brava (GRO)**, which is 76 km / 47 miles northeast of Barcelona. Take a [Barcelona bus](#) with Sagalés bus company, which takes you to the Estació d'Autobuses Barcelona Nord in Barcelona's city center. It's €16 one way or €25 for a round trip. It takes over an hour by taxi to get to Barcelona, and the fare is about €120.

To Reus Airport

You can also try **Reus (REU)** airport, which is 89 km (55 miles) south of Barcelona. The best way is to take a bus from here is to use [the bus company Igualadina](#), which is just outside the airport -- but buy your ticket inside the terminal. Taxis are available outside and fares run about €170.

Search for your airline ticket

Several powerful search engines can help you get a competitive price for your airline ticket.

Kayak is a robust search engine that lets you play around with your dates. **Momondo** is also a good one. **Matrix ITA software** is a lesser-known, but an incredible tool that powers Google Flights and Kayak. You can't book a ticket through here; however, it helps if you want to search for more complicated flights. It doesn't cover budget carriers. Read [this article](#) to help you with your search. **Skyscanner** compares millions of flights, hotels, and car rental services worldwide.

There are dozens of airlines that fly in to Barcelona. Some of the major Spanish airlines are **Iberia** and **Vueling**. My favorite airline that flies to and from the US is **Fly Level**, and it's a low-cost airline. However, flights are more available at peak season. **Norwegian** also has very cheap flights. This means it offers a basic fare with no food, no extra luggage so you can get competitive, inexpensive prices. You can also upgrade to get all the services. It's only open from April to September though. From the UK, there's **EasyJet** and **Ryanair**. Sign up for travel deals like [Airfarewatchdog](#), [HolidayPirates](#), or [The Flight Deal](#) to keep updated.

By Train

If you're coming from another European destination, getting here by train is easy too. There are two main train stations in Barcelona, **Estació de Sants** (Sants Station) and **Estació de França** (França Station). Both are inside the city.

Barcelona Sants Station is the stop for most long-distance trains run by the Spanish state railways RENFE. This is where a lot of regional, national, and trains to France go. It also has two convenient metro stops inside the station. Some don't go to Sants, but **Estació de França**, where it covers only a few regional cities.

For train destinations and tickets, visit the [RENFE](#) website.

By Bus

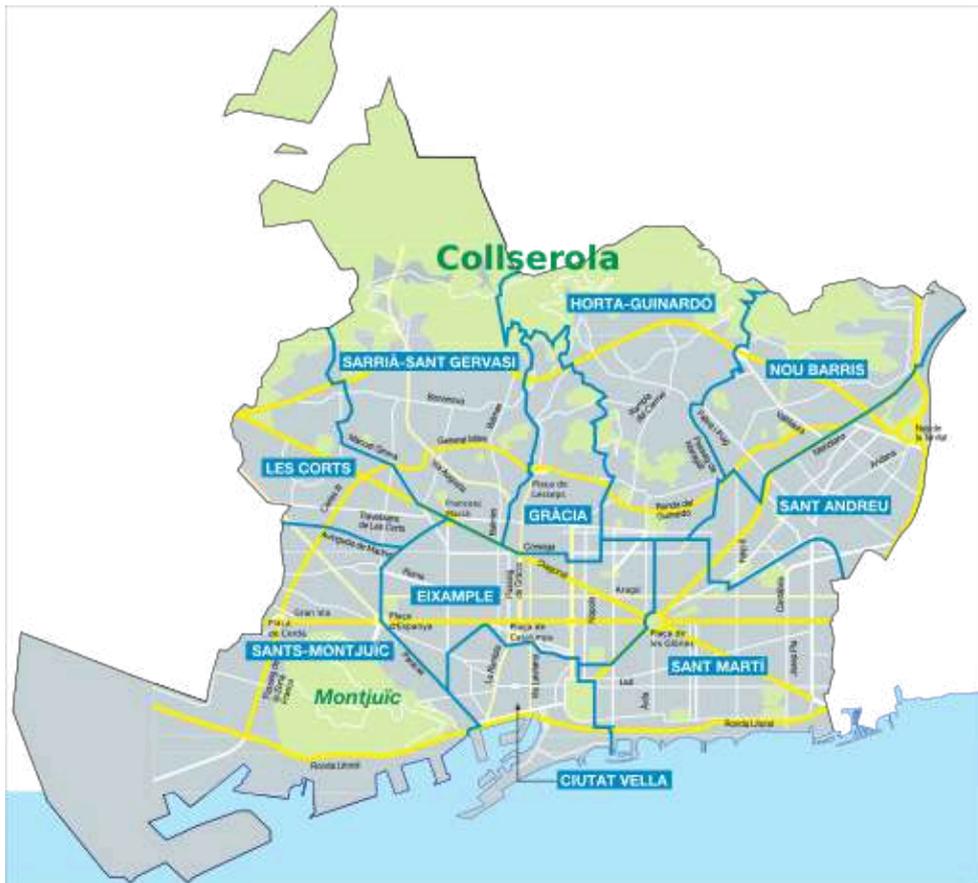
Most buses stop at **Estació de Nord**, which connects Spanish cities, Europe, and North African cities. Visit [the Barcelona Nord website](#) for prices and schedules.

The other station is **Estació d'Autobusos Barcelona-Sants** next to the train station. Alsa and Eurolines are two bus companies that leave from here. Check out [Busbud](#) for the companies that operate from Sants.

ACTION STEP!

Add the estimated cost of your arrival transportation to the **Travel Budget Worksheet** on the last page. Then book your transportation!

Where To Stay



The most popular Barcelona neighborhoods

Neighborhood Guide

Barcelona is divided into 10 administrative districts. Within each district are barris, or neighborhoods. For example, Ciutat Vella is the district, but it's broken down into several neighborhoods to sleep:

Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter) is a central touristic area, where crowds often walk bumper-to-bumper and queue at the endless line at the Picasso Museum. It also has an abundance of quaint courtyards, historical buildings, labyrinthine alleyways, and endearing traditional bars and shops. It's frenzied, fun, and very accessible.

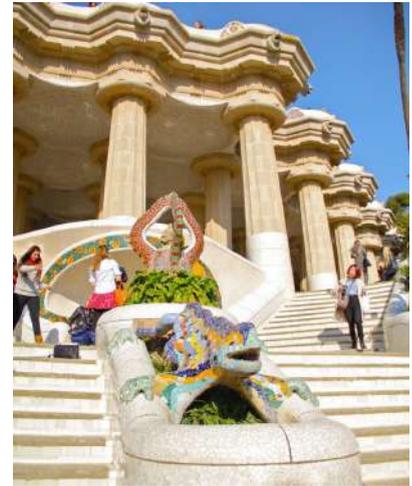
Born is a fashionable neighborhood to hip boutiques, bars, and art galleries. But the busiest areas can also be gridlocked with pedestrians and tourist bikers. However, it's a fantastic place to stay if you plan for many nights out on the town.

Las Ramblas is the infamous chaotic pedestrian street that divides the Gothic Quarter and El Raval. Despite its overcrowdedness, this area is convenient and accessible to all the Barcelona attractions.

El Raval is a gritty but trendy area of Barcelona and a mishmash of Filipino, Pakistani, and North African cultures. The juxtaposition of cool cafes, the modern thoroughfare Rambla del Raval, and the stark-white Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA) give it an updated and rebellious edge. Unfortunately, lately, active drug wars with local police have been making news headlines. I would avoid sleeping here, especially if you have kids, which may keep you on edge. It's perfectly fine to visit during the day.

Eixample (pronounced "eye-shawm-pluh") is the gridded part of the city, where streets are wider and more open than in the tight-knit Ciutat Vella. **La Dreta de l'Eixample** ("right Eixample") is full of elegant modernisme with dark iron street posts and decorative touches on building facades. Find chic hotels and upscale shopping avenues here. **L'Esquerra de L'Eixample** ("left Eixample") was developed afterward and has less ornate buildings but includes more practical buildings. Other neighborhoods include **Sant Antoni** (a gay-friendly area called "gaixample"), **Arc de Triomf**, and **Sagrada Família**.

Gràcia is an animated, but intimate neighborhood. It has a village feel -- with its narrow streets and charming squares -- and is one of the more popular neighborhoods for foreigners to settle. Its artsy independent shops, restaurants, and cafes give it that bohemian personality.



La Barceloneta is a beach neighborhood ideal for sea and sand lovers. It has two parts: the tight residential neighborhood, which is a former fishing village -- and the breezy seaside area. The beach area gets crazy-crowded in the summer, but staying here during hot weather gives you a cooling sea breeze that you don't get in the sticky Barcelona center.

Poble Sec is a quieter neighborhood but a burgeoning foodie magnet, especially on the hip pedestrian street, Carrer de Blai. Its beguiling bodegas, cheap bars, trendy tapas, and sites to sip vermouth make it a place for gastronomy fans.

Poblenou is a less populated seaside area for tourists and is often called the "Catalan Manchester" because of its former factories. With its recent urban regeneration project, 22@, it's undergoing a facelift of implanted forward-thinking tech companies and hip bars and restaurants.

Neighborhood cheat sheet

For easy access and to save time: Born, Gothic Quarter, Las Ramblas

For high-end hotels and modernist buildings: Eixample

For beach lovers: La Barceloneta and Poblenou

For nightlife: Born

For restaurants: Poble Sec

For an artsy, community vibe: Gràcia

For an international mix: Raval



NOTE! Whichever area you choose to stay, if you have a metro nearby, it won't take long to travel from Point A to Point B. I don't think I've taken more than 1.5 hours to travel anywhere within Barcelona. The public transportation system works smoothly and runs 24 hours on Saturday nights.

Hostels, Hotels and Rented Apartments

Barcelona has hundreds of cheap hostels, boutique hotels, a huge range of mid-range, and some luxury hotels. Expect prices to be higher in the summer. Alternatively, a furnished rented apartment could be more affordable and convenient. Book early in advance to find the best options!

Be aware: the star hotel rating system varies hugely between regions, and in Barcelona, ratings are erratic. Each region in the EU has their own system! You truly can't trust it (as I've been to a crappy 4-star hotel here), so, please, use the hotel rating as a general guide.

Hostels

They start at €14 in a shared room. Many Barcelona hostels are like boutique hotels: small, design-centric hotels with a unique personality. Hostels can also offer social outings and events like paella-making classes or tapas tours. A good option for a cheap private room is to book in a hostel.

My recommendations:

Sant Jordi Rock Hostel Palace: Eixample // 2 stars

This boutique hostel gets rave reviews for its cleanliness, central location, and fun atmosphere.

It's equipped with a rooftop pool and a rock-bar themed chill-out area.

Starting at €47 // [See current prices for Sant Jordi Hostel Palace](#)

Black Swan Hostel: Near Born // 2 stars

Centrally located near the Arc de Triomf, this cozy and good-vibes hostel hosts paella cooking classes, club outings, movie nights, and a friendly social



atmosphere. For its price, it's unbeatable. For longer stays, take advantage of its coin-operated laundry room.

Starting at €57 // [See current prices for Black Swan Hostel](#)

Budget Hotels

Starting from €55, budget hotels are ideal if you don't want to spend a lot of money but want to stay in a clean, comfortable bed.

My recommendations:

Hotel BestPrice Gracia: Gracia // 1 star

Hotel BestPrice Gracia is a clean, modern hotel that comes without the extra bells and whistles but at an affordable cost. Set in the charming Gracia neighborhood, you get independent bars, restaurants, and boutiques two hops away. Soundproofed rooms, comfort, and convenience all in one.

Starting at €58 // [See current prices for Hotel BestPrice Gracia](#)

Praktik Vinoteca: Eixample // 3 stars

Stay at the easy-on-your-wallet hotel and enjoy the wine-themed accommodations. It also has a breakfast buffet, wine tasting sessions, and a complimentary glass of wine upon arrival. Clean, tidy, soundproofed rooms in a low-key but central area.

Starting at €80 // [See current prices for Praktik Vinoteca](#)

Mid-range hotels

The most common hotels in Barcelona are mid-range hotels starting from €100.

My recommendations:

Hotel Santa Marta: Ciutat Vella // 2 stars

This hotel is just 1 km from the beach between Barceloneta district and the Gothic Quarter. Clean and small, its location is perfect for getting the best of culture, architecture, and sand.

Starting at €113 // [See current prices for Hotel Santa Marta](#)

Grupotel Gravina: Ciutat Vella // 3 stars

Near Plaza Catalunya and 5 minutes to Las Ramblas, this hotel is set in a 19th-century building with a stately facade. You're also welcomed with a drink on arrival from 2-6pm. Ideal for families who need to get up and go to save on travel time.

Starting at €195 // [See current prices at Grupotel Gravina](#)

Occidental Atenea Mar - Adults Only: Near the Mar Bella Beach // 4 stars

On the seafront with a view of the beach, the Occidental Atenea Mar has a seasonal infinity pool with a sauna, Balinese beds, and a snack bar. It's in an uncramped part of the city where space is luxury.

Starting at €157 // [See current prices for Occidental Atenea Mar](#)

Hotel Rec Barcelona - Adults Only Hotel: Near Born // 2 stars

This modern, clean, and bright hotel is just 100 meters from the Arc de Triomf.

Hotel Rec Barcelona offers special free activities like beer tasting, a cocktails masterclass, and walking tour. Enjoy the rooftop terrace with 360° views, a delicious tapas bar, seasonal pool, sun terrace, and lounge area. Starting at €172 // [See current prices for Hotel Rec Barcelona](#)

Hotel Limonaia: Eixample // 3 stars

Hotel Limonaia is a chic hotel just a 3-minute walk from La Pedrera. Catch gorgeous city views of Gaudí's masterpiece right in the heart of the shopping hub of the elegant Passeig de Gracia.

Starting at €110 // [See current prices for Hotel Next To](#)

Hotel Ibis Barcelona Centre: Sagrada Familia // 2 stars

Hotel Ibis has a stylish and funky design and is just a 2-minute walk the Sagrada Familia and a 15-minute walk to Plaça Catalunya. You can expect a convenient 24-hour bar and 24-hour front desk. It's also a family-friendly accommodation.

Starting at €119 // [See current prices for Hotel Ibis Barcelona Centre](#)

HOTEL BARCELONA CATEDRAL: Gothic Quarter // 4 stars

This boutique hotel is situated in the heart of Barcelona near the Barcelona Cathedral, but tucked away on a quiet street near "The World Begins with Every Kiss" mural. (In fact, my cousin enjoyed staying here, and we met up for cocktails at the fashionable bar.) It's spacious, stylish, clean, and comfortable. You can enjoy the rooftop pool, workout gym, and relaxing restaurant bar. They even offer free Barcelona walking tours and wine and cheese tastings. Starting at €152 // [See](#)

[current prices for Hotel Barcelona Catedral](#)

The Hoxton: Poblenou // 4 stars

This is where I'd stay if I were visiting Barcelona! A reader recommended this gorgeous hotel to me, and he had a fabulous experience. Hoxton is a series of open-house hotels around the globe, including in cities like LA, Amsterdam, Paris and London. It has a swimming pool, two cool restaurants, a flat-screen TV, and more. Its decor is design-y and modern. You get a perfect view of Torre Glories and are a walk away from the cool Poblenou neighborhood.

Prices start at €165 // [See current prices for the Hoxton Poblenou](#)

Luxury hotels

These are at a minimum - 5-star hotels around Barcelona - many with infinity pools, sleek fitness centers, and white-glove service. Most start at around €250.

My recommendation:

Hotel The Serras: Sagrada Familia // 5 stars

A historical building with exceptional style, it was named one of the top 25 luxury hotels in the world by TripAdvisor. It's even attracted the likes of Pablo Picasso as a young man. Here you can expect limousine service, a library with a bar, soundproofed rooms, and chillout music on the rooftop bar. From there, catch sweeping views of the Barcelona port and the Mediterranean Sea.

Starting at €300 // [See current prices for Hotel The Serras](#)

Rental Apartment: €90-€300+

A rental apartment can save you tons of money because you have a kitchen to cook your own meals. I always recommend [Booking.com](#). Of course, you can try **AirBnB**, which has endless listings in Barcelona. [Find an apartment through Booking.com](#)

My recommendation:

Midtown Apartments: Eixample

Midtown has centrally located soundproofed apartments near the stylish Passeig de Gracia. The kitchen includes a stove, oven, dishwasher, washing machine, and dryer. For summer days, a swimming pool is ready to cool you off. Choose between 30 of the 1- 2-, or 3-bedroom apartments.

Starting at €126 // [See current prices for Midtown Apartments](#)

El Alma de Las Ramblas: Las Ramblas

These six apartments with minimalist-boho decor are centrally located on Las Ramblas. Each unit looks like a Pinterest-y home, featuring a private bathroom, a fully equipped kitchen with a microwave, wifi connection, a seating area with its own gallery wall, a washing machine, and a flat-screen TV. Starting at €254 // [See current prices for El Alma de las Ramblas](#)

ACTION STEP! Add the estimated cost of your accommodations to the **Travel Budget Worksheet** on the last page. Then book it!

Attractions + Entertainment

Now we're going to find out how much it costs for popular sights, tours, shows, and anything else that you fancy doing here.

First of all, what are the essential must-dos Barcelona?

Here are my picks:

1. Go inside the incredible **Sagrada Familia**.
2. Wander the ancient streets of the **Gothic Quarter and Born neighborhoods**.
3. Walk down **Las Ramblas**.
4. Visit a local food market.
5. Check out the colorful **Park Guell**.
6. Check out Barcelona's **seaside area** and **beachfront**.
7. Walk down **Passeig de Gracia** to see Casa Batlló and La Pedrera.
8. Visit **Montjuic** and get a panoramic view of Barcelona.
9. Eat like a local and have **Catalan food**.
10. Have some oozing hot **chocolate con churros**.

Read more details in my post: [Magnificent Must-Dos in Barcelona!](#)

Popular Barcelona Attractions

Some people come to Barcelona without spending a cent on Barcelona attractions. It's because they don't go inside the buildings! You can enjoy the city by doing this too. Many museums are free on Sundays from 3-8pm. See [which ones are free here](#).

- **La Sagrada Família:** This basilica is a must-see if you come to Barcelona. This church designed by Antoni Gaudí is over 100 years in the making and will be completed in 2026. How cool would it be to say you witnessed it being built? (Read my [in-depth post on how to visit!](#))

The best time to visit La Sagrada Família would be the first thing in the morning when it opens, ideally around 9 or 10am. If you want to take incredible photos, the best time to enter is around sunset ([check what time that is here](#)) - when the light creates beautiful colors through the stained-glass windows in the church. It is also a very popular time to visit as these time slots to enter go quickly!

Entrance free for children 10 and under, people with accredited disability 65% or higher + 1 companion, the unemployed (Wednesdays from 2:00 pm), and ICOM members. Discounts are available for students, under 30s, and seniors.

I highly recommend buying your Sagrada Família tickets ahead of time as this is the busiest attraction in Barcelona. It's more expensive at the door. Also, you will save up to an hour!

- **Basic ticket:** €26. Entrance + audioguide. The audioguide is quality - you'll learn that every detail of the Sagrada Familia is symbolic and intentional. It's worth it! Children under 11 are free, but be sure to send your request 48 hours beforehand. [Check for other discounts here](#). [Buy your ticket](#)
- **Sagrada Familia with Guided Tour:** Sagrada Familia has their own tour guides, and the tour lasts 50 minutes. €30 Entrance + guided tour, available in 5 languages. [Buy your ticket](#)
- Alternatively, try a 90-minute guided tour if you purchase through Ticketbar. This is a much longer, more detailed tour than what the official Sagrada Familia tour offers and gives you more value. €34.50 [Buy your ticket](#)
- **Ticket + towers + audioguide:** €36. If you want to go and get a view of the city, I highly recommend going up one of the towers, the Passion Facade or the Nativity Facade. NO, they aren't the best views of the city, but you can still see pretty far. More importantly, you'll be able to see the cool details of the church up close. You take an elevator to go up, but you must climb down a set of spiraling stairs on the way down (not for the faint of heart). Kids under 6 aren't allowed. [Buy your ticket](#)

Tips on visiting Sagrada Familia:

- Try to arrive a little earlier or on time. You don't want to be surprised by long queues to get your audioguide or to go up the towers.
- You cannot take a guided tour with a tour guide AND go up one of the towers. Unfortunately, it's one or the other. Trust me, I tried a million ways!
- Which tower - Passion Facade or Nativity Facade? Both are excellent. The Passion Facade is taller, and the staircase to go down is a little wider. The Nativity Facade has a bridge you can cross, and you have more views. Both are great, although many recommend Nativity!

Take a look at the [La Sagrada Familia map here](#).

- **Casa Milà (La Pedrera):** This wavy building of offices and residences has a remarkable roof of soldiers that resemble soldiers. If you buy it online, it's €28. Lines can be long also, depending on the day. [Buy your discount La Pedrera tickets here](#)
- **Casa Batlló:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Casa Batlló is a peculiar building that resembles a strange creature. Its facade has undulating window frames and skeleton-like balconies. Queues are not as long at Casa Batlló as at La Sagrada Familia. Prices of admission start at €31 online, but the price depends on the day. You'll see the weird variations on the website. Free admission for 12 years old and under. [Buy your Casa Batlló tickets here](#)



La Pedrera or Casa Batlló? Which should you go inside if you had to pick one? Try Casa Batlló - it has a more interesting interior.

- **MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona):** A stark white building in El Raval, MACBA is for serious art lovers of contemporary art. They also have free admission days every Saturday, from 4 to 8 pm, May 18 (International Museum Day), and September 24 (Feast of La Mercè holiday). Entrance is €11 at the door or the MACBA website. Get it for €11.40 and [buy your discounted MACBA tickets from the official Barcelona tourism website](#)
- **Museu Picasso:** It's a limited-capacity museum and queues are quite long. It's €12 for basic entry for the Permanent Collection. You'll see Picasso's works as a budding artist - so a lot of art wouldn't be immediately recognizable. It's €18 euros for a guided tour. There's a reduced price option for those under 25. There's also a free admission day on Sundays, and now free admission afternoons on many weekdays in 2024. Look online!. [Buy your Picasso Museum tickets here.](#)
- **Parc Guell:** This [park designed by Antoni Gaudí explodes with colors and shapes](#). Availability is limited per day, so it's smart to buy ahead of time. It's a bit out of the way. If you take the metro (L3) you'll have to do an uphill climb. But if you take the 24 bus, you won't have to do any climbing. It's €10 online. [Buy your Park Guell tickets here](#)
- **Flamenco shows:** Flamenco isn't originally from Catalonia but the south of Spain. Nevertheless, a number of prestigious dancers perform in Barcelona. I can recommend the **Gran Festival Flamenco de Barcelona at Palau de la Música Catalana**, which I've seen myself. Other than enjoying the flamenco dance, you'll enjoy the Palau de la Musica, the impressive modernist music hall with stunning decor. Buy your [Gran Festival Flamenco de Barcelona tickets here](#). Or check out all other [flamenco shows in Barcelona](#).



Visiting Barcelona with little ones? I'm a mom too! Check out my [100+ Things to do in Barcelona with kids!](#)

- **Food tour:** If you want to try local Catalan food, I suggest you do a food tour the day you arrive to prime your trip! Tours can run from 15 - 450 euros. Most include tastings of meals in local bars and visiting a local food market. Or, try eating with locals - read about [my experience with Teresa](#) here.

I highly recommend this food tour with Eye on Food Tours. Not just a food tour, it's also an informative and fun history lesson rolled into one. You won't regret this tour! Book this [food tour with them here](#) via Get Your Guide. It's free cancellation up to 24 hours in advance.

- **Walking tour:** Walking tours are about €15 - €70. They run from basic attractions, night tours, photography tours, and more! **Runner Bean Tours** offers free tours of the [Gothic Quarter](#) or of [Gaudí attractions](#). They're free but a donation is appreciated. For a family walking tour, try Runner Bean's small-group walking tour, ideal for kids ages 4 - 12. [I did this with my kids](#), and they loved it. It's an fun, interactive tour they learn with activity books too! [Book your family tour here](#) or [check out other Barcelona walking tours](#)
- **Bike tour:** Bike tours are exhilarating. I recommend [Steel Donkey Bike Tours](#), the "alternative" bike tour. It's four hours long and lets you see the sights quickly. Even if you're not super athletic like me, your guide will go at a pace you can handle. Bike itineraries are informally personalized to the groups, and fortunately, they only take on a maximum of 8 people. [Book your Steel Donkey Bike Tour](#) or [check out other Barcelona biking tours](#)

Barcelona Discount Cards

If you're planning to see numerous attractions, consider buying a discount sightseeing pass to save money.

Barcelona City Pass

[Barcelona City Pass](#) is a fantastic deal if you plan to do heavy sightseeing. They include. I recommend this card before other cards. You get:

- Entrance tickets to the Sagrada Familia with Fast Track
- Entrance tickets to Park Güell
- 1-day or 2-days tickets for the Hop on Hop off Bus
- Audioguide for Park Güell and La Sagrada Familia

It's €86.50 (price plus handling). [Buy your Barcelona City Pass](#)

But if you want to add a fast track and tower access for the Sagrada Familia, it's €105.30 (price plus handling) [Buy your Barcelona City Pass \(Sagrada Familia towers and fast track included\)](#) You'll get all the tickets by email, no need to pick them up!

Go Barcelona (formerly Barcelona Pass)

These guys have recently added more attractions to their card *and* at a cheaper price. There are two kinds of cards: **All-Inclusive** and **Explorer**. Buying through Go Barcelona is risk free - you'll have up to 30 days from your purchase date to return

any non-activated passes for a full refund! Note that the Sagrada Familia is *not* included.

All-inclusive has 2-, 3-, 4- and 5-day passes. Prices start at €114 and includes 30 attractions including Barcelona Bus Turistic, Casa Batlló, La Pedrera, Camp Nou Tour, Old Town and Gothic Quarter walking tour, Modernism and Gaudi walking tour, Poble Espanyol, Recinte Moderniste de Sant Pau, and more! Note that it does *NOT* include the Sagrada Familia. Buy your [Go Barcelona All-inclusive pass here](#)

Explorer is a pass that offers entrance for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7 *attractions* and *NOT* days. Also, you don't have to use the pass on consecutive days. Instead, you use the pass within a 30-day time frame. The price starts at €59 for 2 attractions, your pick. For example, if you selected Casa Batlló (€35) and the Sagrada Familia Guided Tour (€49), that's €84. Buying an Explorer pass saves you €25! That's a fantastic deal. Buy your [Go Barcelona Explorer pass here](#).

Barcelona Card

This card gives you both free and discounted entrance to dozens of places from a choice of 3, 4, or 5 days. *It also includes free transportation.* And free cancellation! Note that the Sagrada Familia is *NOT* included.

A quick sample of attractions:

Free: Museum Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Fundació Joan Miró, Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA), CCCB, Museu Picasso, and Fundació Antoni Tàpies

Discounted: €3 off Casa Batlló, 20% off La Pedrera, 20% off Barcelona Zoo

You also get discounts on tours, flamenco shows, and a few restaurants. [Buy your Barcelona card with a Guidebook through Viator](#)

Adults: 3 days: €49.24 / 4 days: €59.49 / 5 days: €64.62

Children, ages 4-12: 3 days: €26.16 / 4 days: €35.90 / 5 days: €41.03

Articket

If you're passionate about art museums, this is the best deal for you. It allows you to skip the line and gets you into the six best art museums:

Museum Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC)
Fundació Joan Miró
Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA)
Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB)
Museu Picasso
Fundació Antoni Tàpies

A full, unused ticket booklet is valid for 12 consecutive months after redemption. *Please note that many museums are closed on Mondays, so check opening hours.* Also, children 16 years and younger can accompany you for *free!*

If you were to buy entrance tickets, separately it would be €58. But if you buy the Articket, you get about 45% off. [Buy your Barcelona Articket for €35](#)

ACTION STEP!

Write down the “must-sees” and how much they cost to the **Travel Budget Worksheet** on the last page. Then buy your tickets in advance!

Food and Meals

When it comes to food costs, Barcelona is reasonable and much cheaper compared to the US. Here are the typical costs:

Meals

Breakfast: €3-4 a coffee and toast or pastry

Lunch: €4 for fast food meals or €8-16 euros for an average “menu del dia”

Menu del día: €8 - €15. This is a 3-course meal for lunch only. Many restaurants have them but not all. It includes first dish, second dish, and dessert, and a drink. Sometimes it includes coffee.

Dinner: €10 - €30

Menu items at a restaurant

Coffee: €1.20 - €1,80. Going past €2 would be considered too expensive.

Beer: €2.75

Coke: €2 for a .33-liter bottle

Cheat sheet: If you want to keep a *super minimalist budget*, you can probably eat for about €20 / day. Let me break this down: €3 euros for breakfast, €5 for lunch, and €8 for dinner, then €4 for coffee at a bar and supermarket snacks like fruit. BAM!

Supermarket / grocery store items

A baguette from a bakery: €.45 - €.90

A liter of milk: €.75 - €1.40

Apples: €1.99 - €2.99 / kilo

Bananas: €2 / kilo

Dozen eggs: €2

A 1.5-liter bottle of water: €.40

ACTION STEP! Add the estimated cost of food to the **Travel Budget Worksheet** on the last page.

Getting around

Public Transportation

Barcelona is compact and is easy to navigate, and its transportation system is reliable and runs smoothly. The company that runs the transportation system is **TMB**. It has a combination of metro, bus, tram, and train.

The most cost-effective way of getting around Barcelona for a few days is to buy a T-Casual transportation card (formerly known as the T-10 card). This is a paper card that you can buy at a kiosk at every metro and tram station. There are 10 trips on one card, and it's *intermodal*, meaning you can transfer from metro to bus to tram on the same card. You *cannot* share cards with another person on the same trip. Children ages 4 and under travel for free.

Single one-way ticket: €2.40 (you can buy it on the bus also)

T-Casual ticket (10 one-way journeys): €11.35

For more information about public transport, head [here](#).

Discount Travel Cards

Hola BCN card

If you think you'll be using public transportation frequently, try the Hola BCN card. It's a non-transferable card that allows you unlimited travel over 2, 3, 4, or 5 days. When you buy the card online, you'll get an email with a code. Then find a kiosk machine at any metro station, and you'll get your card from the machine.

2-day pass: ~~€16.30~~ (€15.58 online)

3-day pass: ~~€23.70~~ (€22.61 online)

4-day pass: ~~€30.80~~ (€29.45 online)

5-day pass: ~~€38.00~~ (€36.29 online)

If you buy the card online, you get a 10% discount. [Buy your Hola BCN card with a 10% discount via the official TMB website](#)

Hop-on Hop-off Bus

Personally, I love the double-decker bus because you can sit back and enjoy the view from up high. Barcelona is 100 square kilometers, and while the hop-on hop-off bus doesn't cover all of it, it still covers over four hours' worth of sightseeing. The price can be off-putting for many though. There are two companies that have double-decker buses that allow you to travel among the major points an unlimited number of times. I recommend it if you have a short time in the city and you're a little lazy like me.

Bus Turistic

The first company is the **Bus Turistic**, and it has 3 different routes:

The Red Route: Plaça de Catalunya to Ciutadella Park via Passeig de Gràcia, Avinguda Diagonal, Sants train station, Montjuïc and Port Vell (2 hours)

The Blue Route: Plaça de Catalunya to FC Barcelona's stadium via Passeig de Gràcia, Sagrada Família, Gràcia, Park Güell, Tibidabo and Pedralbes (2 hours)

The Green Route: Olympic Port to the Fòrum via Poblenou and the best views of the city's beaches. (40 minutes) *The Green Route runs only from late March to early November.*

[See a map of the routes in PDF](#)

1-day pass (adult): €33

1-day pass (child): €18

2-day pass (adult): €44

2-day pass (child): €23

[Buy your Bus Turístic tickets](#)

Barcelona City Tour bus (Barcelona Hop On Hop Off bus)

This tour bus has 2 different routes:

West Route: Las Ramblas, the cruise-ship terminal, Montjuïc Mountain, the Plaza de España and the Camp Nou Stadium (2 hours)

East Route: Gothic Quarter, the Aquarium, the seafront, Agbar Tower, the Sagrada Família and Park Güell (2.5 hours in summer, 2 hours in winter)

[Download a map of the two routes in PDF](#)

1-day pass (adult): €33

1-day pass (child): €18

2-day pass (adult): €44

2-day pass (child): €23

[Buy your tickets Barcelona City Tour tickets](#)

The Bus Turistic has more stops, more available audio languages, arrives more often (every 5 minutes vs. 7-15 minutes). It's also much more popular, which also means it's more crowded. I have only taken the Bus Turistic, and I recommend it. However, I've read the opinions of the Barcelona City Tour bus, and both seem good.

Taxis

A reliable but expensive way to get around Barcelona is by taxi. They're easily recognizable by their black and yellow cars. To flag one down, look for the green light and/or a sign that says "libre" or "lliure", which means "free". I rarely take one unless I'm going to the airport. When I have taken one, I've never had a bad experience.

The minimum fare for a T-1 zone (within Barcelona) is €2.30 and it's €1.21 per kilometer. There's a minimum €20 fee from the airport. For a list of fares, [go here](#). For all the taxi stands in Barcelona, [go here](#). To calculate how much your fare will be, [go here](#). If you prefer to phone a taxi, you can use [Radio Taxi 033](#) at 933 033 033. Or if you want a little more expensive but environmentally-friendly choice, call [Taxi Ecologic](#) at 932 78 30 00. You're not expected to tip the taxi driver. If you prefer to use a taxi app, try **MyTaxi** or **Cabify**.

Car rental

As I mentioned, driving a car isn't recommended if you're just visiting the city. However, if you plan on visiting outside of Barcelona and insist on driving, a few companies in Barcelona are **Sixt**, **Enterprise Rent-a-Car**, **Avis**, **Hertz**, **Europcar**, and **Thrifty**. You can rent the most basic car for as low as €7 / day. On top of that fee, you'd have to pay gas, insurance, etc.

My favorite rental car company that we've used three times is **Record Go**. One time, my husband left his glasses in the car, and they walked them to him to the Seville airport from the outside location. They also answer our questions thoroughly. Visit [Rentalcars.com to compare prices](#).

ACTION STEP! Add the estimated cost of transportation to the **Travel Budget Worksheet** on the last page. Then book your transportation!

Itineraries

So what if your time is limited, what should you do? Here are some quick and dirty suggestions to maximize your day.

If you only have...

1 day: Meander around the oldest parts of the city: El Born and El Barri Gòtic. [Stroll down Las Ramblas](#) and visit the Mercat de La Boqueria. Opt for an thrilling [bike tour](#) -- or a [tourist bus tour](#) if you feel like kicking back and soaking in the scene. Read my [complete one-day itinerary here](#).

2 days: All of the above. Then [enter La Sagrada Familia](#) and walk along the breezy beach of La Barceloneta and sip on some cocktails at a *xiringuito* (a beach bar on the sand).

3 days: All of the above. Discover the multicultural Raval and Gracia neighborhoods. Or indulge in Gaudí's other wonders like La Pedrera, Casa Batlló, and Park Guell. [Relax at Parc de la Cuitadella](#). Read my in-depth [3-day itinerary of Barcelona](#) for details!

4 days: All of the above. Then consider the mountains of Tibidabo or the artsy Gracia neighborhood. How about a day trip? My first suggestions are [mountains of Montserrat](#) or the [beaches of Sitges](#). See my post: a [full 4-day itinerary of Barcelona!](#)

5 days. All of the above. Want more ideas for day trips? Check out my post: [Best day trips from Barcelona](#).

7 days: All of the above. Spend some time in the green hills of Montjuic mountains to visit the "miniature Spain" of Poble Espanyol, the Joan Miró museum, or the medieval Montjuic Castle. Consider a different day trip like the beach area with a castle in Tossa de Mar, the [magical Vall de Núria](#), or [the romantic medieval town of Besalú](#).

ACTION STEP! Are you a detailed planner or a go-with-the-flow traveler? At a minimum, have a general daily plan so you don't miss anything.

Travel Documents

If you're an EU member, you don't need a passport to enter Spain. If you're NOT an EU member, then you need a valid passport. And if you plan to stay longer than 90 days, then you also need a visa. You can get it by visiting the Spanish Consulate in your country of residence. For US citizens, find your [visa information and requirements](#). Find the complete list of [Spanish embassies and consulates here](#).

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance isn't required, but you may consider getting it while you're here. Your credit card policy may cover some insurance costs like health coverage, emergency assistance, lost luggage, or trip days and cancellations. If you're a frequent traveler, consider using [World Nomads](#) travel insurance.

Health Insurance

The law in Spain requires that every person is attended to if you seek medical care -- even if you don't have health insurance. So if you do wind up seeing a doctor here, ask for a detailed receipt. Also, carry prescription medication and a copy of your prescription just in case.

Before you come, make sure you're up to date on your vaccinations. If you're from the US, check the [CDC travel in Spain](#) page to see basic requirements before traveling.

Driver's License

If you plan on renting a car in Spain, you must bring your driver's license and also get an International Driving Permit. Word on the street (aka the Internet) has it that the rental companies won't ask about it. But if you're stopped by the police, it's good to show you're driving legally. If you're in the US, head to the [local AAA](#) to get yours.

As I mentioned, Barcelona is a walkable city, and given the traffic density and sky-high parking fees, it's more hassle than it's worth.

Other IDs

Take advantage of member discounts - especially if you're a journalist, student, senior citizen. An ISIC card is widely accepted.

Travel Apps

Download these suggested free travel apps to help you get around.

- **Google Maps** is pretty accurate when it comes to directions and metro, tram, and bus times. I have it set in American English, so I snicker at hearing Google Voice's funny attempt at Catalan street names.
- **TMB** is the official transportation app of the City of Barcelona, and will also help you get from Point A to Point B. For bus and metro times, it's probably more reliable than Google Maps, so I like to use it as a backup.
- **Citymapper** will also help you plan your trip within Barcelona. A few friends of mine swear on it.
- **MyTaxi** or **Cabify** will help you get a taxi to your location. All work within the city, but it might take some time to catch one on busy Saturday nights. **Uber** was used, but was kicked out of Barcelona in January 2019.

Packing List

Gather or shop for your essentials before you leave.

- Clothing. See my post about [what to wear in Barcelona according to season](#).
- Printed documents of your reservations in case you lose your phone
- A contact card in case of emergency
 - Close contact information at home
 - Health care provider at home
 - Local accommodations information
 - Your country's embassy or consulate information in Spain
- Money belt or neck pouch. (**[Buy a versatile belt that doubles for working out too!](#)**)
- An anti-theft purse (**[read my buying guide](#)** to find the best one or skip to **[buy my top pick](#)**)
- Camera
- Adapters and/or converters. The standard European electric current is 220-240 volts. In Spain, they use the rounded two-prong outlet. Most North American appliances are 110 volts and will need an electricity converter.
Buy a [simple adaptor](#) or an [all-in-one universal adaptor](#)
- Chargers / memory cards / batteries for your phones and cameras
- Any must-have appliances (irons, hair dryers) from home. I don't recommend bringing a hair dryer as its high voltage use may blow it out. Most hotels usually have hair dryers in the rooms or are available on loan. However, if you *must* bring one, it needs a converter for the round two-prong outlets.
- Medication with the prescription or medical report for airport customs. See more about that on [Spain's Travel Safe website](#).
- Health needs:
 - Contact lenses and/or glasses
 - Sunscreen
 - Sunglasses
 - Hat
 - A small emergency kit: aspirin, antacid medicine, bandages, face masks for public transportation, hand sanitizer, etc.
 - Safety pins

Checklist Before You Go

1. Register with your embassy for assistance in the event of an emergency.
2. Check with your phone provider to see if you can use your phone globally to avoid roaming charges.
3. Phone your credit card company you're going on a trip so they accept your purchases in Spain.
4. Leave your itinerary with someone trustworthy.
5. Arrange a pickup or plan where you'll park your car when you return home.
6. Get travel insurance.
7. Keep hard copies of your travel documents in case you lose your phone.
8. Check if you have enough medications.
9. Take a photo of your suitcases in case they get lost in airport transit.

Helpful Travel Tips

Good to know before you come to Barcelona.

- **Credit cards.** Establishments have credit card machines that need a PIN to process your purchase. I know this is not the case in the US. So it's possible that your credit card won't work! In most cases, it does. But be prepared to pay cash if it doesn't.
- **The local language is Catalan,** and many times signs are only in Catalan. However, most people speak Spanish, also called *Castellano*. Not everybody speaks English. So if you don't speak Spanish, ask politely, "*Hablas inglés?*"
- **Tipping.** Tipping doesn't go beyond 5%. If you're American, you won't look like a cheapskate if you tip this much. Many locals round to the nearest Euro.
- **Tap water.** It's safe to drink tap water in Barcelona, although not all locals do it. It may not taste the best, but you don't have to worry about getting sick. Also, restaurants don't serve tap water at a restaurant. You could probably ask, but it's not customary. You'll have to order a bottle of water instead.
- **Bullfights are banned.** If you were expecting to see some *toros* toughing it out against a bullfighter, I'm afraid you'll find most of those bullrings used as venues or shopping centers.
- **"Skip the line" or "fast track" tickets.** These are basically tickets when you purchase tickets online, which can save you time waiting in line at your attraction destination to buy a ticket. In most cases, it's NOT a special line like at Disneyland.
- **Worth mentioning again: Many museums are closed on Mondays.** Be sure to check opening hours on official websites before planning your itinerary. My husband and I took the train to the Dalí Museum in Figueres to realize it was closed!
- **Electric voltage.** As I mentioned, the standard European electric current is 220-240 volts. Most US and Canadian appliances are 110 volts and will need a converter. Tip for MacBook owners: all you have to do is bring your normal charging cable AND a plug adapter because Apple computers' chargers already convert the electricity.
- **Politics and independence.** While there is a strong pro-independence movement, intense political striking or demonstrations may happen, depending on the current situation. 2017 was a somewhat volatile year on

the streets for protestors. Steer clear of demonstrations, and you don't have to worry about safety.

- **General safety.** Violent crime is rare in Barcelona. However, the city is rife with pickpockets. Be mindful while on the metro or buses. Just recently, I got too comfortable and two women were oddly close to my camera bag! For peace of mind, you might consider buying an [anti-theft purse](#). Read my post on how to [avoid pickpockets in Barcelona](#) and [other safety threats](#) that surface every few months.
- **WiFi.** Every Metro stop has free WiFi, and you can find free WiFi in many parts of the city, so getting online isn't difficult. Look for the blue "W" sign. See a map and [find out more about Wi-fi here](#).
- **More tips if you're traveling to other cities in Spain.** Double check the latest documents you might need at [Spain's official Travel Safe website](#). This includes information on visa, passports, health, and more.

That's it! Don't forget to use the last worksheet to budget your trip costs.

Let me know if you have any questions. I read all my emails. Send questions, typos, love notes, and hate mail to justine@latitudefortyone.com. Thanks, and enjoy Barcelona!

Travel Budget Worksheet

- 1) 1ST COLUMN: HOW MUCH THE ITEM COSTS PER PERSON
- 2) 2ND COLUMN: MULTIPLY THE ESTIMATED COST BY THE # OF PERSONS TRAVELING AND/OR THE # OF DAYS YOU'LL BE TRAVELING
- 3) ADD THE TOTAL COST AT THE BOTTOM

	ESTIMATED PER PERSON	x PERSON / DAY / ETC.
TRANSPORTATION		
AIRLINE TICKETS		
AIRPORT PARKING		
TRAVEL CARD OR METRO		
TAXI		
ACCOMMODATIONS		
HOTEL / APARTMENT		
FOOD		
MEALS		
COFFEE / SNACKS		
BARS / CLUBS		
SUPERMARKET FOOD		
ATTRACTIONS		
MUSEUMS		
TOURS		
SOUVENIRS		
TOTAL		