



Simply Smart Travel

Barcelona and The Spanish Riviera

PHOTOS AND ARTICLE BY
JEFFREY R. ORENSTEIN, PH.D.



Editor's Note: If you enjoy travel, this column is for you. My goal is helping those over 50 (and under 50 too) leverage the most satisfaction from their precious travel time and dollars. Each column will share what I have learned on trips near and far and/or provide travel ideas and tips from experts.

Barcelona is the multifaceted crown jewel of the Spanish Mediterranean coast. With its many architectural and cultural splendors, it is little wonder that Spain's second largest city, with a metropolitan population of 4.5 million, is a frequent cruise ship port of call and a vacation mecca for Europeans. The city is also a major venue for trade shows and exhibitions and attracts business people and tourists from around the globe.

Whether you're there on business or pleasure, you should explore Barcelona's Gaudi and Moorish architecture, fabulous waterfront, superb beaches (some permitting nudity), eclectic shopping and people watching and abundant museums, Barcelona lives up to its hype.

Top: Gaudi's famous under-construction cathedral dominates the Barcelona skyline. **Middle:** The impressive National Art Museum of Catalonia looms in the background in central Barcelona. **Bottom:** This apartment complex is one of the many Gaudi-designed structures in Barcelona.





Barceloneta, an old fishing village is one of the highlights of Barcelona. It is full of good restaurants.

BEFORE YOU GO

Reading Carlos Ruiz Zafon's 2001 thriller, *The Shadow Of The Wind*, set in Barcelona or Robert Hughes' *Barcelona* (1992), a paean to the city's art, history and highlights will put you in the Barcelona ambiance before you go.

When you're ready for reservations, some useful web site are:

- **The official city site—**
<http://www.barcelonaturisme.com/English/>
- **A solid tourism site—**
http://www.barcelona.com/barcelona_city_guide
- **Another good resource—**
<http://www.viator.com/Barcelona/d562/top-attractions>
- **A helpful background—**
<http://wikitravel.org/en/Barcelona>

GETTING THERE

Barcelona is easily accessible by plane. El Prat Airport (BCN) is a quick trip by train or bus into the central city.

Barcelona's Sants railroad station has connections to most of Europe, including high-speed trains from Madrid and Paris.

Highway connections are good and many cruise ships dock there.

WHEN YOU ARE THERE

If you have only one day on a cruise ship shore excursion:

- Take a guided tour on a hop-on, hop-off tour bus to make the most of your time. And get an overview.
- Have a paella lunch and walk around at Barceloneta.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE TWO OR THREE DAYS

Must-sees for a short trip are:

- National Art Museum of Catalonia
- La Sagrada Familia, the breathtaking under-construction cathedral designed by Antoni Gaudi
- La Rambla, an eclectic street with shops, entertainment, buskers galore and people-watching
- La Barceloneta, the city's old fishing district, home to many good restaurants
- Get paella and take in a flamenco performance at Tablao Flamenco Cordobés (<http://www.tablaocordobes.es/en/>)
- Eat at a tapas bar



Showmanship is the order of the day at many area restaurants

IF YOU HAVE SEVERAL DAYS:

In addition to the above:

- Rent a car and drive along the Mediterranean to Valencia, about three hours away
- Go on a wine-tasting tour
- Take a sailing excursion or go deep sea fishing
- Tour the art museums (get a Barcelona Museum Pass)
- Visit the Aquarium



JORENSTEIN IS THE CO-PUBLISHER AND EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF *LIVING ON THE SUNCOAST MAGAZINE*

AND BLOGS ABOUT TRAVEL AT WWW.SIMPLYSMARTTRAVEL.COM. HE AND HIS WIFE, VIRGINIA, ENJOY SIMPLY SMART TRAVEL AND WRITING ABOUT IT. HE CAN BE REACHED AT JORENSTEIN@SIMPLYSMARTTRAVEL.COM COMMENTS ARE WELCOME.



Flamenco is exciting to hear and watch.

Exploring Barcelona At A Glance

MOBILITY LEVEL: Recommended for those who can walk short distances, climb stairs and have the ability to enter and exit buses, trains, cabs, etc.

WHEN TO GO: With its mild Mediterranean climate, Barcelona is comfortable year-round. To avoid crowds and get the best prices, spring and early to mid-fall are best.

WHERE TO STAY: If you come by train, stay around the Sants train station. The Barcelona Sants hotel is built over the station and is an excellent value. Hop-on, hop-off buses and city buses stop here. Other nice places to stay are along the waterfront.

SPECIAL TRAVEL INTERESTS: Gaudi, Catalanian culture



You've told us in reader surveys that you love to travel. So do the publishers of this magazine. We have done our homework and pooled our resources to get a great group rate and extras. So let's travel together, save money and have a ball!

Living On The Suncoast Luxury Trip From Paris to Prague

Readers Invited

Announcing the first *Living On The Suncoast* Luxury Travel experience: We'll start in Paris on June 27, 2015, tour the "City of Light," take the bullet train to Luxemburg and embark on a luxury riverboat cruise across Germany for seven days on the ultra-upscale Ama Lyra, a spacious river cruiser with only 146 passengers, a crew of 44, large staterooms (most with balconies) and gourmet food and beverages. We'll visit Trier, Cochen, Mainz, Wertheim, Wurzburg, Bamberg and Nuremberg and end up in Prague for two days.

This spectacular 13 day tour (plus a day each for travel to and from the U.S.) is an amazing value, considering that the

\$4483 price includes hotels in Paris and Prague, the bullet train, other ground transportation, the river cruise with all meals, shore tours, wi-fi, bicycles, wine with meals, entertainment, wine tastings and much more.

Why pay more to cruise on a crowded river boat with small cabins and few extras when you can go upscale with a balcony and lots of extras for less? Ama operates the best river cruises in the world.

To get your PDF brochure and an invitation to the pre-trip information meeting and cocktail party, email editor1@livingonthesuncoast.com. Please don't delay because we only have a few suites at these prices and they WILL sell out quickly.