
Spain/Calella-Barcelona

The Costa Brava (wild coast) forms the twisted rocky northeastern shoreline of Spain. This rugged coast starts a few kilometers north of Barcelona and stretches to the French coast. Despite its fierce name it is a popular holiday spot and has more hotels and guesthouses than any other single area of Spain. The Costa Brava also has a lot of history to offer, it is dotted with structures such as towers, walls, castles and monasteries. The popular resort of Calella lies on this sun-drenched coast. The climate by itself should be enough to make it a favorite with visitors and, in addition, it also has lots of attractive shops, bars and shows. To top it all, it is at only 25 km distance from Barcelona Spains second city and capital of Catalonia. The Catalans are a fiercely independent people and since 1980 Barcelona has had its own provincial government called "La Generalitat". Artistic activities abound and cultural attractions are numerous.

Telephone and time difference

Access code to USA: 00 (dial tone). To phone Spain: 34; time difference (Eastern Daylight) plus 6 hours.

Climate

As far as weather is concerned, there is no better choice. Hardly a cloud passes overhead during the dry hot summers between May and September, when temperatures are generally in the 80s F (28°C). Winters, though moist, are mild enough to support miles of umbrella pines, acres of cork trees, and groves of olive and fig trees. In fact, the so-called wild coast is anything but that, when it comes to climate, the average annual temperature is a comfortable 60°F (15°C).

Museums and Sights

Calella is a great place for sun-bathing and going out, but for art and culture it is best to go to Barcelona. Here your main problem will be; lack of time to see everything you want to see. There are any museums to choose from; among them; the Fine Arts Museum (paintings and sculpture), the Archaeological Museum (history of the Moorish invasion), the Municipal Museum of Music, the Maritime Museum (ship models and nautical lore). The excavations of the original city as it stood from Christs time to A.D. 400 can be visited as well.

A thing you will have to go and see is Antonio Gaudi's Templo Expiatorio de la Sagrada Familia a huge cathedral started, in 1882 and so far only 1/5 completed. People have been arguing about it for ages; you'll find it wondrous or a nightmare, but it certainly won't leave you cold.

In addition to all this, Barcelona has a Zoo, a Terrarium and an Aquarium, and you can also have fun riding the aerial railway and the Ferris wheel on Mount Tibidabo.

Theatre and Nightlife

Calella offers everything you might expect in a fashionable holiday resort, there are: discos, bars, restaurants, outdoor-cafes and flamenco-shows. Barcelona has a rich theatre life but most of the plays will be in Spanish and Catalan and that might present a problem. If you want to go and see a film, check for the ones marked V.O. (original version) in which case they will be subtitled in Spanish and not dubbed. Don't miss the chance to watch a Sardana, Catalonia's regional dance; participants young and old join hands and dance around their belongings. The best chances are Saturdays and Sundays at around 7 pm in front of the cathedral.

Palau de la Musica Catalana offers classical music and they sometimes have a series of free concerts in summer. For Flamenco, try Los Tarantos, Plaza real 17; El Cordobes, Rambla Capuchinos 35 and El Patio Andaluz, Aribau 242.

Shopping

Shops are usually open from 9.30 am to 1 pm and from 4.30 to 8 pm on weekdays and are closed on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Department stores usually stay open through the traditional three hour siesta and most are open all day Saturday from 9.30 am to 7.30 or 8 pm. Souvenir shops abound both in Calella and in Barcelona. In Barcelona, lots of shops can be found on the Ramblas. El Corte Ingles, Av Diagonal and Plaza Catalunya, is Barcelona's and Spain's leading department store. For local color, try the u-shaped walk from Plaza de Pino through Calle Petritxol, around the corner of Puerta Ferrisa, to Galerias Malda and back to the Plaza.

Excursions

City-tour of Barcelona 25 km to the south of Calella a "swinging city" with a rich soccer tradition. You may always be sure of something interesting going on in this city and when tired and hungry you can sit down to a gorgeous Catalan meal. On the Ramblas and promenades you can buy everything imaginable or spend your time watching the world go by while enjoying a drink at an outdoor-cafe. Your should include the 15th century cathedral with the Gothic district that surrounds it; the statue of Columbus; the parks of Montjuich, where part of the 1992 Olympics took place; and the Poble Espanyol (Spanish Village), an open-air museum where typical reconstructed buildings from every region in Spain are displayed.

Monserrat: The gigantic boulders of Monserrat surround Catalonia's spiritual center: the monastery that houses "La Virgen de Monserrat" and some 80 Benedictine monks. There are two museums nearby with religious treasures and paintings from the Catalan Renaissance. From the top of a nearby funicular you can walk to the hermitage of St. Joan along a path with spectacular views of the monastery and the valley.

By the way, Monserrat is also famous for its beer and on the way there it is possible to visit a liqueur distillery.

Costa Brava; Rocks and pine trees hanging over shady coves make up the Costa Brava. Visit the most important holiday resorts on the beautiful coast, such as Tossa de Mar which offers a good mix of history and natural beauty. The narrow cobblestoned streets of the Vila Vella provide spectacular views of nearby coves. In Blanes you can visit the botanical gardens with many exotic plants.