

3 hours in ... Barcelona

Fast, colorful and hectic – it's all in your face: the buzz of Las Ramblas, the main shopping street, the sights, sounds and smells of the markets, the medieval mystery of the Gothic Quarter, the Barrio Gótico. You'll be wide-eyed with wonder. Between the fancy designer stores and vintage bookshops, the days and nights just whiz by. There's just one thing you had better not do: never, ever call Barcelonians Spanish. They are Catalonians, and Barcelona is the capital city of Catalonia, with its own language, culture and cuisine – all worth exploring and savoring.

CULTURE

La Sagrada Familia

Beauty or the beast? To make your own judgment of Antonio Gaudi's impressive yet incomplete cathedral, you have to see it for yourself. If you are patient enough, you could try climbing one of the steeples to enjoy the terrific views of the city, and capture a sense of Gaudi's grandiose style.

Carrer Mallorca 41
08013 Barcelona
www.sagradafamilia.cat

Iguapop Galeríe

Barcelona is a creative melting pot, setting trends in graphic design, fashion and cuisine. It's a mecca for artists and bohemian types. And all becomes clear when you visit this cheerful gallery, which organizes and showcases everything from concerts to comic-book exhibitions: Barcelona embraces a huge variety of styles. Everything fits together, in a wonderful and inspiring mix of contrasts.

Carrer del Comerç 15
08003 Barcelona
www.iguapop.net

SHOPPING

La Boqueria

Simply known as La Boqueria, The Mercat de Sant Josep is one of the biggest and most colorful food markets in the world. Barcelona's oldest indoor market is just south of Las Ramblas, the main shopping street. Even if you aren't hungry, just looking at the piles of seafood, fruit, mushrooms, vegetables, hams, olives and herbs will stoke your appetite.

Plaça de la Boqueria
08001 Barcelona

Vincon

An interior-design temple. And even if the exclusive furniture and home décor is out of your price range, it's still worth wandering through this museum-like boutique. There are some neat Barcelona souvenirs on the ground floor.

Passeig de Gràcia 96
08008 Barcelona
www.vincon.com

BARS/NIGHTLIFE

Elephant

One of the city's most exclusive addresses is Elephant, situated in a baroque villa. A beautiful garden is home to the eponymous bronze elephant.

Paseo de los Tilos 1
08034 Barcelona
+34 93 334 0258
www.elephantbcn.com

El Bosc de les Fades

Don't be surprised by the dwarves, mermaids and waterfalls – the Bar el Bosc de les Fades (Fairy Forest Bar in English) is part of the wax museum. Just sit back and relax in the surreal medieval setting and enjoy a nice quiet drink.

Pasaje de la Banca, 7
08002 Barcelona
+34 93 317 2649
www.museocerabcn.com

FOOD

La Dama

Surrounded by Art Nouveau charm, you can savor culinary creations such as potato soup with caviar, tender lamb steak or fresh fish. This restaurant has been quite rightly awarded a Michelin star.

Avinguda Diagonal, 423
+34 93 202 0686
www.ladama-restaurant.com

Bar Pinotxo

The city's most famous chefs line up at this counter, located at the entrance to the La Boqueria market on Las Ramblas, and serve simple tapas, toasted sandwiches and grilled lobster.

La Boqueria 466-467
La Rambla 91
08001 Barcelona
+34 93 311731

Moo

The restaurant in the excellent Hotel Omm offers sumptuous Mediterranean cuisine. One of Europe's best sommeliers, Roger Visaà, advises on the most suitable wines. Moo meets even the highest culinary and aesthetic expectations. What more could you ask for?

In Hotel Omm
C/ Rosselló 265
+34 93 445 40 00
www.hotelomm.es/

RUNNING – CYCLING – SKATING

Beach promenade

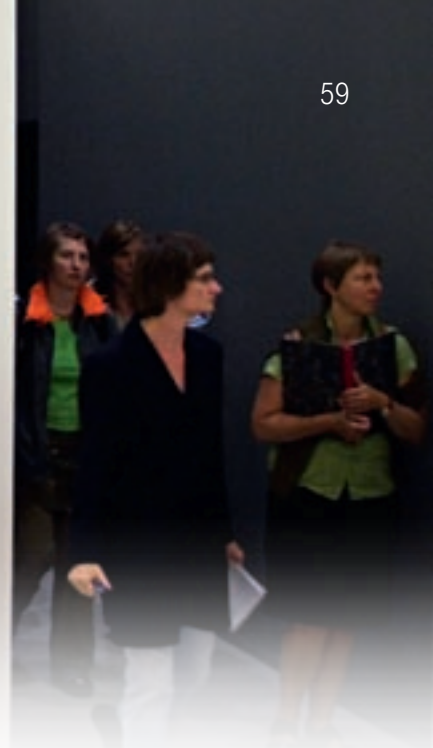
The 4-kilometer-long promenade in Barceloneta is easily accessible. It runs parallel to the beach, and is perfect for running, rollerblading and cycling with the sea breeze on your face.

Parc de la Ciutadella

East of the historical center is one of the city's most popular parks, the Parc de la Ciutadella – idyllic and shaded. It's best to come in through the north entrance, by the Arc de Triomf subway station.

Montjuic

Running with a view: the 210-meter high Montjuic offers a pleasantly soft underfoot forest terrain. Marked 1,600-meter and 1,900-meter trails loop around the castle.



Hanover

This city is a classic case of love at second sight: at first glance, it comes across as standoffish and withdrawn. However those who stay a while discover a city rich in grand Art Nouveau buildings, magnificent parks and intimate side streets. The federal state capital can also boast a few records: Europe's tallest fountain, and the world's largest exhibition center, covering around a million square meters. However, those who simply walk themselves footsore through the 27 halls and pavilions at CEBIT (March 2 to March 6, 2010) will miss out on something. Namely the city's vibrant nightlife – and probably some of the friendliest people in Germany.

RESTAURANTS

Die Insel

Downtown vacation – that's exactly what Die Insel wants to convey. The restaurant's reputation has spread far past the city limits. And it's not just because of its great location on the Maschsee Lake, or its impressively styled interior. Here you can expect only the very best of German cuisine, as interpreted by award-winning chef Norbert Schu.

Rudolf-von-Bennigsen-Ufer 81
30519 Hanover
+49 511 831214
www.dieinsel.com

Clichy

Oh la la.... Your palate will delight in Ekkehard Reimann's creations. French cuisine with German and Italian influences – an exquisite blend for foodies. The subtle, timeless ambience of this award-winning restaurant is fitting for business meals or a romantic tête-à-tête. You definitely need to book.

Weissekreuzstrasse 31
30161 Hanover
+49 511 312447
www.clichy.de

Flow Food

Hanover's first organic fast-food restaurant serves vegan burgers with fries, and empanadas. Perfect for a quick and healthy lunch.

Engelbosteler Damm 13
30167 Hanover
+49 511 2783 8844

SHOPPING

Lo & Go

You've stained your shirt. Your shoes are rubbing. Then Lo&Go is the place for you. Excellent-value designer clothes, from cashmere sweaters to socks for the office. The collection in the main Stammhaus store is classic, while the Provocatore shop offers more casual, sporty options. They also have an impressive shoe selection.

Windmühlenstr. 3 / Osterstr. 24
30159 Hanover
www.lo-and-go.de

Querbeet

If your heart flutters at the sight of a Philips fold-up record player, you're in the right place. Here you'll find well-loved classics and old bits n' bobs, from kidney-shaped tables from the 50s to 70s plastic chic.

Podbielskistr. 7
30177 Hanover

CULTURE

Sprengel Museum

Hanover has something to swagger about: it is home to one of Germany's most celebrated museums for 20th century art. Contemplating Baselitz's topsy-turvy pictures will give you a new perspective on life.

Kurt-Schwitters-Platz
30169 Hanover
www.sprengel-museum.de

Rote Faden

36 highlights over 4.2 kilometers: The Rote Faden (Red Thread) tourist trail runs right through downtown and brings you by all the best sights. From the singing manhole cover to the indoor market, to historic buildings and churches. Further information is available at the tourist office.

Ernst-August-Platz 3

Kestner Society

The airy rooms of a former spa provide an impressive backdrop for the Kestner Society's sculptures, drawings and photographs.

Goseriede 11
30159 Hanover
www.kestner.org

NIGHTLIFE

Bar Zino

The city's Hanover 96 soccer stars often drop by this chic venue, alongside German film and high society VIPs – as well as wannabes. Zino is rather an exclusive club instead of just a bar. Driving house beats and R&B get people moving on the dance floor.

Otto-Brenner-Str. 9
30159 Hanover
+49 163 837 6418
www.zino-bar.de

RUNNING – CYCLING – SKATING

Maschsee

The Hanover classic is the route around Maschsee Lake right in the city center. One lap is approximately seven kilometers, and passes the Sprengel Museum, rowing clubs, and boat rentals. It's a popular trail, so be prepared to dodge elderly ladies walking their dogs or other joggers, walkers and skaters from time to time.

Stadtwald Eilenriede

A good alternative is the Eilenriede, a huge urban forest, which stretches down to the Maschsee Lake – which incidentally is three times bigger than New York's Central Park. The ascents on the bridges help get your pulse up – providing a short, sharp shock.

RELAXATION

Relax Express

Hot oils and herbal tinctures at both Relax Express massage clinics are a lifesaver for tense muscles. The comprehensive offering ranges from the 40-minute Business Break for 39 euros to the four-hour full-body treatment for 199 euros.

Podbielskistr. 1 and Marienstr. 26
30163 Hanover
+49 511 300 2050 or 450 0172
www.relax-express.de

