CATALONIA, THE SEAL OF QUALITY
Welcome to Catalonia, a land at the leading edge which is eager to offer you hospitality and give you such an unforgettable stay that you will want to come again. Catalonia greets you with its beautiful scenery, its rich cultural heritage and, above all, its open-minded, enterprising people. The thriving Catalan economy has always made our country a pole of attraction, a land that looks outwards, beyond its borders, towards the horizon.

A land of progress, well-being and hospitality. Catalonia was a driving force behind the economic activity and industrialization of 19th and 20th century Spain and nowadays it plays the same role in the new economy of the 21st century. Today, as in the past, ours is a land of encounter, a hospitable land where cultures from all over the world live side by side, a land with an open outlook, which sees tourism as a great bridge towards mutual knowledge and understanding, contact and exchange.

Catalonia, the seal of quality. Catalonia has consolidated its position as a leading tourist destination by offering one key premium: quality. Entrepreneurs and government work as a team to provide a wide range of facilities giving top-rate service. Our efforts are focussed on a model that is both competitive and environmentally sustainable. Every year we train thousands of professionals to offer the finest and most attentive service to all our guests.

Catalunya, a diverse land. Besides the charms of its beaches and mountains, Catalonia offers other more up-to-date attractions: the worldwide prestige of its cuisine and wines, for instance, or Barcelona now one of the most popular city tourism destinations, or the successful centenary celebrations of artists such as Antoni Gaudí or Salvador Dali. All this is clear proof that Catalonia is a diverse and modern country offering an extensive selection of top-notch products.

Catalonia, several countries in one. Catalonia has more varied landscapes than virtually any other European country. Visitors will find parks high up in the mountains, such as the one in Garrotxa, and parks lying right on the sea shore, such as Cap de Creus, the Empordà Marshes, or the Ebro Delta. Routes for discovering our history have been preserved or are being recovered: the Romanesque art route through the Pyrenees, which takes in the Boi valley churches, or the Cistercian route, a tour of the great monasteries of Poblet, Sant Cugat and Vallbona de les Monges, where the monarchs of the Catalan dynasty were laid to rest. We have cities, too, where you can immerse yourself in ancient cultures, such as Tarragona, built by the Romans, or Girona with its Jewish quarter. And of course you can enjoy one of the world's loveliest coastlines featuring beaches with fascinating rugged cliffs and an array of colours that range from the emerald-green of the small coves along the Costa Brava to the luminous blue of the seafront around Tarragona.

Catalonia, a creative land. Catalonia is also known the world over as an up-to-date, innovative country. This applies to all forms of culture, from literature to music, and from the decorative arts to the visual and performing arts, but also to the field of scientific research. There are treasures of architecture and city planning to enjoy, including such ground-breaking sights as Barcelona’s unique Eixample district, acknowledged as a landmark of Modernist architecture throughout the world. This legacy is further enhanced by the works of great Catalan artists, such as Gaudí, Dalí, Miró and Tàpies, which can be admired all over the country, from the Sagrada Familia, the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya and the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, to the Teatre-Museu Dalí in Figueres.

Catalonia, a land with a thousand years of history. Catalonia is a country with an open mentality which is proud of its identity and keen to make itself known abroad. Its distinct language and culture reflect the strong personality which makes it unique in our increasingly globalized world. It is a land steeped in culture, with traditions and festivals dating back a thousand years and offering the ideal combination of feeling and culture. But it is also part and parcel of contemporary Europe and outstandingly permeable to the latest ideas and trends on the international cultural scene. It was in just this way that Modernism a current that was establishing itself throughout 20th century Europe entered Catalonia and won worldwide renown for Catalan artists including Gaudí, Domènech i Montaner, and Puig i Cadafalch.

It only remains for me to invite you to discover Catalonia’s rich natural and cultural heritage, enjoy its plentiful leisure facilities, and get to know our people.

Once again, welcome to Catalonia.

Ministry of Enterprise and Labour
Catalonia is a small country, in terms of size. But its personality, shaped by over a thousand years of history, and its distinct culture and language, have made it both rich and great. Catalonia’s origins as a geographical, territorial and linguistic unit date back to the high Middle Ages.

THE STRENGTH OF IDENTITY

Catalonia, a European country

Catalonia lies in the north-eastern Iberian peninsula. It has over seven million inhabitants and occupies an area of 31,780 km², comparable to Belgium, the Netherlands or Switzerland.

Over the centuries, the Catalan nation has enjoyed different degrees of sovereignty under the political institutions and forms of government proper to each era. Nowadays the Generalitat, or autonomous government, is Catalonia’s organ of government. It comprises a President, an Executive, and a Parliament, which is one of the most ancient in Europe. Its jurisdiction is defined by a Statute of Autonomy and it shares political power with the institutions of the Spanish state.
Catalonia's thousands of years of history

The language, a sign of identity

Catalonia's own language is Catalan. This has been the case since the 12th century. When democracy was restored in 1979, Catalan and Spanish were both recognized as official languages in Catalonia. The origins of the Catalan language date back to the early Middle Ages. Despite periods of prohibition and repression, the majority of Catalans still use it today.
There are clear parallels between Catalonia’s periods of splendour and the proximity of Catalan art forms to those predominant elsewhere in Europe: classical art when Hispania Tarraconensis became one of the foremost provinces in the Roman empire; Romanesque art at the time of Catalonia’s birth as a nation; Gothic art and the great medieval and pre-Renaissance literature when Catalonia dominated the Western Mediterranean; and Modernism – Catalan Art Nouveau – in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the time of Catalonia’s national rebirth and the rise of its industrial bourgeoisie. Similarly, during the first three decades and the second half of the 20th century, the contributions of artists born or trained in Catalonia were decisive to the development of the European artistic avant-gardes, and since the recovery of democracy, Barcelona has emerged as a standard-bearer of city planning and design.

Catalonia’s prehistoric heritage contains much that is of note: numerous Mediterranean Basin cave paintings which have been declared part of the Unesco world heritage; the deep imprint left by the ancient Iberian culture, notably the settlement at Ullastret; and the vestiges of the Greek and Roman cultures, at the Graeco-Roman site of Empúries and in the Roman city of Tarragona, another Unesco world heritage site. Many finds are on show in the archeological museums, first and foremost the Museu Nacional Arqueològic in Tarragona.

When Catalonia was not yet Catalonia

The less plentiful Visigothic legacy is concentrated in Terrassa, while traces of the presence of Muslims are most noticeable in Tortosa, the Terres de l’Ebre, and Lleida and its area of influence.
The beauty of Romanesque art

Many of the finest manifestations of Catalonia’s architectural and artistic heritage date from medieval times. Romanesque was the art form which coincided with Catalonia’s birth and early development and the formation of the Catalan language. It was strongly influenced by the Lombard style and spread from the Pyrenean valleys over much of the country. Pride of place among the over two thousand Romanesque buildings still standing in Catalonia must go to the churches of the Boí Valley –declared part of the Unesco world heritage—, the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes, and the cathedral of La Seu d’Urgell. But the most striking and memorable feature of our Romanesque legacy are the paintings and sculptures in the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC) in Barcelona—which has one of the richest Romanesque and Gothic collections in the world—and the very interesting diocesan museums.

The splendour of Gothic art

Most of the great medieval cathedrals date from the Gothic period or slightly later. They were the emblematic seats of the powerful bishoprics which informed much of the Catalan territory in the feudal age. The most noteworthy are those of Barcelona, Tarragona, and Girona (the single nave of Girona cathedral is the widest in European Gothic architecture), along with those of Lleida and Tortosa. But the true paradigm of Catalan Gothic architecture, on account of the mathematical precision of its beautiful proportions, is the splendid church of Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona. The spectacular Cistercian monasteries –Poblet, Santes Creus and Vallbona de les Monges— are also in Gothic style—or Gothic-Romanesque transition style—, as is the monastery of Sant Cugat del Vallès and that of Pedralbes in Barcelona. Catalan Gothic painting also flourished during the late Middle Ages, assimilating influences from Burgundy, Flanders and Italy. The most distinguished Gothic painters include Jaume Huquet, Lluís Borrassa, Ferrer Bassa and the Serra brothers. This was also the age of the great chroniclers (King Jaume I, Muntaner and Desclot), of great poets influenced by Petrarch (such as Ausiàs Marc from Valencia), and of novels such as Curial i Gricols and Tirant lo Blanc (The White Knight). Together they constitute the Golden Age of Catalan literature.

The gems of Modernism

Gaudí is undoubtedly the most famous architect of Catalonia’s Modernist movement. Much of his work has been included in the Unesco world heritage and year after year it draws millions of visitors who gaze in fascination at the bone-like structures of Casa Batlló, the stone waves of Casa Milà (La Pedrera), the Sagrada Família, rising like a vertical hymn, or the dream-like landscapes of Parc Güell. But Gaudí is only part of the Modernist heritage: other leading names include Domènech i Montaner, the creator of the Palau de la Música Catalana and the Hospital de Sant Pau, and Puig i Cadafalch, who designed some highly characteristic buildings. Though Barcelona was the epicentre of Modernism, there are Modernist buildings in many other Catalan cities, such as Girona, Lleida, Reus, Tarragona, Canet de Mar and Olot. Industrial buildings were also built in Modernist style, even in the countryside, notably the cooperative wineries of Conca de Barberà, Priorat and Terra Alta. The painters Casas and Rusiñol, who were also Modernists, sensitized the public to the artistic influence of Paris, while writers like Verdaguer, Maragall, Guimerà, Rusiñol himself, and many others rebuilt Catalan literature on the basis of the everyday language—still very much alive—and the memory of the great medieval literature.

The contemporary heritage

At the same time as the Noucentista movement—a classicist, learned, pro-European current of the first three decades of the 20th century—, an avant-garde reaction in tune with European trends got underway: Picasso and Cubism, Miró and Dalí and Surrealism. These artists spent much of their lives in Catalonia and many of their works are here. The same is true of other contemporary artists, notably Tàpies. Catalan literature, which has produced poets such as Foix and Carner, narrators such as Josep Pla, and novelists such Mercè Rodoreda, is part and parcel of the great literary currents of recent times, though its development was abruptly cut short by the Spanish Civil War. Since the return of democracy, Catalonia’s energy and creativity have been primarily reflected in the fields of city planning, design, drama and music, thanks to professionals of international renown and venues and institutions such as the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Auditori, and Teatre Nacional de Catalunya. The powerful Catalan publishing industry has enabled the literary situation to return to normal and works are now available in both Catalan and Spanish by a magnificent array of authors: Salvador Espriu, Juan Marsé, Quim Monzó, Jesús Montcada, Gabriel Ferrater, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Eduardo Mendoza, Maria Mercè Marçal, and many others.
The Gran Teatre del Liceu, overlooking the Rambla in Barcelona, has risen from its ashes after a devastating fire. Its audience of passionate opera-lovers, its cutting-edge equipment, and its opera and ballet programme—a tasteful blend of classical bel canto and Italian Romanticism, Wagner (a long-standing tradition in Barcelona), and 20th and 21st century forms of musical expression which delight the younger generations—make the Liceu one of Europe’s great opera houses.

The Liceu’s own productions alternate sagaciously with coproductions with other European theatres, making it possible for the great opera and ballet companies of our times to appear there alongside a wide selection of top-flight singers who uphold the tradition of Montserrat Caballé, Jaume Aragall, Josep Pons and Josep Carreras.

History and tradition have endowed Catalonia with a rich and attractive cultural fabric embracing the full gamut of the performing arts, from drama to the cinema, via all styles of musical creation. Catalonia also excels in artistic performance and interpretation and possesses infrastructures second-to-none in which the illustriousness of the past combines with state-of-the-art technology to create an ideal setting for performances by leading international stars.
The Catalan theatrical tradition dates back to the Middle Ages. Great Catalan-speaking playwrights and actors have earned prestige for both drama and theatrical venues all over the country. Catalonia has also played a pioneering role in experimentation and renovation. Companies like Comediants, Els Joglars, Dagoll Dagom or the innovative Fura dels Baus are applauded far beyond our frontiers. Every summer sees a new edition of the open-air Teatre Grec festival on Montjuïc and the Fira del Teatre al Carrer (street drama festival) in Tàrrega. Plays by young writers have regained popularity, enabling new playwrights to emerge. Some, such as Sergi Belbel, have gained an international reputation.

Catalonia, with Barcelona at its forefront, has an established musical tradition. Its symbol is the Palau de la Música Catalana, a UNESCO world heritage building designed by the great Modernist architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner and recently enlarged by another famous architect, Òscar Tusquets. In latter years the supply of “serious” music has been extended by the opening of the Auditori, a building by Rafael Moneo which is the home of the Orquestra dels Joves de Catalunya and the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya. Catalonia has produced classical composers such as Enric Granados, Isaac Albéniz, Xavier Montsalvatge and Robert Gerhard and classical musicians including the cellist Pau Casals and the singer Victoria de los Ángeles. However, it also has a strong Flamenco tradition, embodied first and foremost by the bailaora Carmen Amaya and the singers Miguel Poveda and Ginesa Ortega, as well as a jazz tradition featuring such sensational performers as pianists Tete Montoliu and Agustí Fernández and percussionist Jordi Rossy.

Catalonia hosts film festivals, such as the Festival Internacional de Cinema de Sitges, and music festivals which take place in historic buildings and other places of special artistic interest (examples are the festival held in Peralada Castle or Barcelona’s Festival Grec). Catalonia also opens its doors to fusion music, jazz, electronic music, and the so-called world music. All this, along with other key musical events such as Sónar—a festival of advanced music and multimedia art—has made it a landmark on the European music scene.
THE CATALAN COAST, A WINDOW ONTO THE MEDITERRANEAN

The natural parks along the coast

The Ebro Delta, Cap de Creus, Empordà Marshes and Medes Islands are the main natural parks and protected areas on the Catalan seaboard. The Ebro Delta’s great alluvial plain, covering approximately 320 km², is one of the western Mediterranean’s largest aquatic habitats. Part of it has been declared a natural park. The characteristic vegetation —reed and rush beds and riverside woods— and the wide expanses of rice paddies and market gardens are home to an extraordinarily rich and varied fauna —notably waterfowl and seabirds— which has made it a favourite haunt for birdwatchers. The Cap de Creus, in Alt Empordà, is a protected area comprising both land and seashore and unusual geological formations. One of its prime attractions is the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes, built in the 10th-12th centuries. Alt Empordà also has another natural park: the Empordà Marshes, the second of Catalonia’s great wetlands, which is inhabited by numerous marshland plant and animal species and also draws many birdwatchers. Farther south, opposite the coast at L'Estartit, lie the Medes Islands. The seabed surrounding them is of enormous interest to diving enthusiasts.

With some 580 kilometres of coastline, Catalonia is a fundamentally Mediterranean country. It has a wide variety of seascapes, ranging from the secluded coves of the Costa Brava in the north to the Costa Daurada with its long beaches of fine sand in the south. There are over 200 beaches and 43 marinas.
The most striking features of the **Costa Brava**, which stretches from the Cap de Creus to Blanes, are sheer cliffs plunging straight into the sea, coves nestling amid rocks and islets, and vegetation down to the waterline. On the Costa Brava, the mountains seem to tumble into the sea and it is this that makes the coastline so rugged. At the foot of the many rocky crags, the coves and beaches lie hidden and protected by the pine groves that grow right down to the sea. Many of today’s major tourist and cultural resorts, such as Cadaqués, L’Escala, Calella de Palafrugell, Palamós, Begur, Tossa de Mar and Lloret de Mar, are former fishing villages. Further south, on the Costa de Barcelona and Costa Daurada, long, sandy, sun-drenched beaches predominate. Most of the towns on the Costa de Barcelona, such as Mataró, Arenys de Mar and Premià, have marinas. Castelldefels and Gavà have long beaches of fine sand but beyond here, all the way to Sitges, the towering Garraf massif gives rise to small coves. Sitges played a pioneering role in the development of tourism and now hosts interesting film and drama festivals. The **Costa Daurada** also offers extensive beaches with soft sand and shallow waters, and other attractions as well: resorts such as Salou, Torredembarra, Altafulla and Cambrils, and the city of Tarragona, with its Roman remains. The coastline of the **Terres de l’Ebre** includes the important Ebro Delta natural park. The chief coastal towns – L’Ampolla, L’Ametlla de Mar, Sant Carles de la Ràpita and Les Cases d’Alcanar – are former fishing villages which have successfully incorporated tourism and nautical sports into their natural charms.

### The Catalan coast, from north to south

**The Aiguadolç marina**

**36 golf courses**

Catalonia has a long golfing tradition and is now one of the prime European destinations for golfers, offering 36 golf links and 33 pitch and putt courses. Most are located along the coast, or a short distance inland, but there are also some in the hinterland and even at the foot of the Pyrenees.
Because of its varied landforms, Catalonia offers a wide diversity of landscapes for a relatively small country: it is only a short trip from the high Pyrenees, with peaks rising to over 3,000 m, to other convoluted chains of hills with a strictly Mediterranean climate and vegetation, or the cornfields, vineyards, olive groves and scrub of the most arid regions. This broad range of habitats is matched by a rich and varied plant life and characteristic animal and bird species, many of which enjoy protection (the lammergeier in the photo is one example).

The enchantment of Montserrat
One of Catalonia’s most unusual landscapes belongs to the mountain of Montserrat, a natural park lying at the very heart of the country. Its unique contours, resembling a sea of boulders, spikes and fantastic shapes, were created by water and wind which eroded the dense, conglomerate rocks. Montserrat has been a sacred mountain since time immemorial. The Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria was founded there in the 11th century and remains to this day a focus of spirituality and culture. A Romanesque statue of the Virgin of Montserrat —Catalonia’s patroness— is venerated there. The madonna’s dark face and hands have earned her the nickname “La Moreneta” (Little Dark Lady).
THE HINTERLAND

The beautiful landscapes of the hinterland

Man’s imprint is clear on the countryside of the Catalan interior, an area boasting a rich natural heritage and ancient cities with historic buildings, a rich cultural tradition, and long-established markets. The sharp contrasts between the different parts of the hinterland are reflected in the names of tourist regions such as Terres de l’Ebre, Val d’Aran, Terres de Lleida and Catalunya Central. The scenery of the hinterland has been shaped by the work of generations of farmers and a property structure revolving round the traditional unit of agricultural production: the masia, or manor farmhouse.

The diversity of the natural heritage

The natural parks and protected areas of Catalonia’s hinterland are the clearest illustration of the country’s extraordinary range of landscapes. The full gamut of Mediterranean scenery is reflected in the parks located in the coastal and pre-coastal ranges, the lowlands that separate them, and along the Ebro basin: Parc Natural del Montseny (a Biosphere Reserve with a wide array of habitats ranging from strictly Mediterranean to pre-Alpine); Parc Natural del Montnegre i el Corredor; Parc de la Muntanya de Montserrat; Parc Natural de Sant Llorenç i la Serra de l’Obac; Parc Natural del Garraf; Paratge Natural de Poblet; Paratge Natural del Montsant; and the rugged Parc Natural dels Ports.

A lake in the Pyrenees

The Pyrenees dominate the whole of northern Catalonia, extending for more than 230 km from the peaks of Val d’Aran to the Cap de Creus, where they sink into the Mediterranean. For hiking and climbing buffs there are summits rising to approximately 3,000 m, valleys carved out by mountain rivers, glaciers with eternal snows, natural parks and protected areas. In winter the Pyrenees are the ideal spot for skiing.

A land of snow

Catalonia, with its 17 ski resorts, has more winter sports facilities than any other autonomous community in Spain. Of these 17 resorts, 11 offer downhill skiing and 6 cross-country skiing. Together they possess 130 ski lifts capable of carrying over 150,000 skiers an hour, and 640 kilometres of slopes. Artificial snowmaking equipment guarantees snow coverage between 82% and 100% on 160 km of pistes.

Activity tourism

The Mediterranean climate, with its mild winters and not-too-hot summers, is especially suitable for activities like hiking—a network of footpaths over 5,000 km long—or cycle tourism—200 routes—and over 4,000 km of signposted itineraries. One can also go horse-trekking, practise adventure sports such as rafting and kayaking on white water rivers, take boat trips along the Ebro, go diving to discover the amazing seabed round the Medes Islands, or enjoy hang-gliding, canoeing, ballooning and ultralighting.

A Catalan masia

Catalonia’s great natural parks

Catalonia’s great natural parks are located in the Pyrenees and their foothills. They include the following: Parc Nacional d’Aigüestortes i Llac Sant Maurici; Parc Natural de l’Alt Pirineu; Parc Natural del Cadi-Moixeró; Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa; Paratge Natural de l’Albera; and Parc Natural del Cap de Creus. From the loftiest peaks (3,000 metres at the westernmost end) to the cliff tops overlooking the Mediterranean, they offer an infinity of beautiful landscapes.
Distance in kilometres from Barcelona to:

- Balaguer: 143.5
- Berga: 102.1
- Cervera: 94.1
- Falset: 136.4
- Figueres: 138.2
- Gandesa: 183.0
- Girona: 102.5
- Jonquera, la: 107.0
- Lleida: 172.8
- Manresa: 59.7
- Mataró: 31.0
- Montblanc: 113.9
- Pallars: 112.7
- Puigcerdà: 149.4
- Reus: 108.2
- Ripoll: 103.7
- Salou: 111.2
- Seu d'Urgell, la: 172.9
- Sitges: 40.5
- Solsona: 107.8
- Tarragona: 95.1
- Terrassa: 27.6
- Tortosa: 180.3
- Tossa de Mar: 85.8
- Vic: 70.1
- Vilafranca del Penedès: 54.1

Distance in kilometres from Tarragona to:

- Balaguer: 128.1
- Barcelona: 95.1
- Berga: 182.7
- Cervera: 85.2
- Falset: 42.2
- Figueres: 229.3
- Gandesa: 91.2
- Girona: 193.6
- Jonquera, la: 198.1
- Lleida: 100.5
- Manresa: 116.7
- Mataró: 130.3
- Montblanc: 35.6
- Pallars: 203.9
- Puigcerdà: 209.7
- Reus: 14.0
- Ripoll: 194.7
- Salou: 11.5
- Seu d’Urgell, la: 180.2
- Sitges: 62.2
- Solsona: 128.2
- Terrassa: 107.2
- Tortosa: 88.5
- Tossa de Mar: 185.0
- Vic: 161.1
- Vilafranca del Penedès: 117.8

Distance in kilometres from Lleida to:

- Balaguer: 31.3
- Barcelona: 172.8
- Berga: 150.2
- Cervera: 57.8
- Falset: 92.6
- Figueres: 291.5
- Gandesa: 83.2
- Girona: 255.8
- Jonquera, la: 240.3
- Manresa: 110.5
- Mataró: 199.6
- Montblanc: 62.7
- Pallars: 244.1
- Puigcerdà: 181.2
- Reus: 92.0
- Ripoll: 188.1
- Salou: 101.2
- Seu d’Urgell, la: 133.6
- Sitges: 140.0
- Solsona: 108.7
- Tarragona: 99.0
- Terrassa: 169.4
- Tortosa: 123.2
- Tossa de Mar: 253.8
- Vic: 158.0
- Vilafranca del Penedès: 117.8

Distance in kilometres from Girona to:

- Balaguer: 228.6
- Barcelona: 102.5
- Berga: 178.7
- Cervera: 181.2
- Falset: 228.2
- Figueres: 40.5
- Gandesa: 274.8
- Jonquera, la: 27.6
- Lleida: 255.3
- Manresa: 136.3
- Mataró: 74.8
- Montblanc: 196.3
- Pallars: 44.2
- Puigcerdà: 142.8
- Reus: 200.0
- Ripoll: 81.7
- Salou: 203.0
- Seu d’Urgell, la: 171.9
- Sitges: 137.5
- Solsona: 184.4
- Tarragona: 186.9
- Terrassa: 104.1
- Tortosa: 272.1
- Tossa de Mar: 39.5
- Vic: 66.4
- Vilafranca del Penedès: 136.5

Distance in kilometres from Vilafranca del Penedès to:

- Balaguer: 54.1
- Barcelona: 117.8
- Berga: 108.0
- Cervera: 272.1
- Falset: 40.5
- Figueres: 229.3
- Gandesa: 91.2
- Girona: 193.6
- Jonquera, la: 198.1
- Lleida: 100.5
- Manresa: 116.7
- Mataró: 130.3
- Montblanc: 35.6
- Pallars: 203.9
- Puigcerdà: 209.7
- Reus: 14.0
- Ripoll: 194.7
- Salou: 11.5
- Seu d’Urgell, la: 180.2
- Sitges: 62.2
- Solsona: 128.2
- Terrassa: 107.2
- Tortosa: 88.5
- Tossa de Mar: 185.0
- Vic: 161.1
- Vilafranca del Penedès: 54.1

Distance in kilometres from Vilafranca del Penedès to:

- Balaguer: 117.8
- Barcelona: 117.8
- Berga: 108.0
- Cervera: 272.1
- Falset: 40.5
- Figueres: 229.3
- Gandesa: 91.2
- Girona: 193.6
- Jonquera, la: 198.1
- Lleida: 100.5
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- Balaguer: 54.1
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- Vic: 161.1
- Vilafranca del Penedès: 54.1
Catalonia’s cities bustle with vitality. Barcelona, the capital, is one of the great cities of the Mediterranean. Along with its metropolitan area, it accounts for practically half the Catalan population. The inhabitants of Catalonia, however, are concentrated, not merely in Barcelona, but all along the coast. Many other cities, steeped in history and with a fine architectural heritage, have experienced remarkable economic and demographic growth in recent decades. They include Girona, Tarragona, Lleida, Tortosa, Vic, Manresa, Reus, Figueres, Sabadell, Terrassa and Igualada.

CATALONIA, A CONSTELLATION OF CITIES

Catalonia has a long history as an industrially active and enterprising land. Moreover its experience of tourism makes it a perfect destination for business and professional gatherings. It has good trade fair complexes and convention centres and a wide selection of other tourist facilities for the intervals of relaxation between one deal and the next. Every year Catalonia hosts over 400 trade fairs at international, domestic and local level. This figure is hardly surprising for a country with over twenty venues, including the Fira de Barcelona or the new Fòrum Zone Convention Centre which can accommodate up to 15,000 people. Barcelona also hosts international events such as the 080 Barcelona Fashion, Alimentaria, Saló Nàutic Internacional and Construmat. New facilities, such as Tarragona’s Palau de Congressos, have recently been set up, enabling this type of tourism to spread to other Catalan cities, which are gradually earning a reputation as venues for medium-sized conventions. Catalonia’s good transport and communications infrastructure has played a vital role in its economic development. Its modern motorway network can move a large volume of goods and passenger traffic. There are 1,600 km of railway lines which link major towns and cities and connect the Spanish network to that of France.

The largest ports are Barcelona—which handles more goods and passengers than any other in Catalonia— and Tarragona, located near the petrochemical zone. Besides Barcelona international airport, there are two airports that are mainly used by tourist charter companies and low-cost airlines: Girona-Costa Brava, Lleida and Reus.

Catalonia, an active, enterprising country

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Catalonia, an active, enterprising country
Barcelona, Catalonia’s capital, is one of the foremost cities on the western Mediterranean. Founded in Roman times, it experienced periods of great economic and cultural brilliance in the Middle Ages and in the wake of the Industrial Revolution (19th century). It has preserved an outstanding architectural heritage, notably in Gothic, Modernist (Gaudí) and avant-garde styles. Barcelona has a unique, bustling, tree-lined promenade where its citizens gather in all their diversity. It is called the Rambla and stretches from Plaça de Catalunya to near the monument to Columbus. On it stand the Liceu, one of Europe’s most prestigious opera houses, and the market of La Boqueria. It is also lined with popular newspaper kiosks and stalls selling flowers and pets. Two of Barcelona’s most important religious buildings are located in the districts of Ciutat Vella and La Ribera: the Cathedral, built in Gothic times, and the basilica of Santa Maria del Mar, one of the most outstanding examples of Catalan Gothic style.

Barcelona is the undisputed capital of Modernist architecture and one whole district—the Eixample—was built according to Modernist tenets. Passeig de Gràcia is the street with the largest concentration of major Modernist buildings: Casa Batlló and La Pedrera by Gaudí, Casa Amatller by Puig i Cadafalch, and Casa Lleó Morera by Domènech i Montaner. The hill of Montjuïc, where the Olympic Ring was built in 1992, is also the site of three Barcelona museums which are a must for any visitor: the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya (MNAC), housing the world’s finest collection of Romanesque paintings; the Fundació Joan Miró, where the artist’s paintings, sculptures and tapestries are on show; and CaixaForum, a Modernist-style building by Puig i Cadafalch containing a remarkable modern art collection. Barcelona’s most recent urban development projects were carried out in connection with the Forum Universal de les Cultures 2004, organized by the city.

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia

The church of the Sagrada Familia (Barcelona)

Cities with personality

Cities with personality. In the northeast there are established tourist resorts (Palamós, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Lloret, Roses, Begur), seafaring towns which have long been the haunt of world-famous artists (Cadaqués, Tossa, El Port de la Selva), quaint medieval villages (Pals, Peratallada), and cities with important museums and historic buildings (Girona and Figueres).

In southern Catalonia we find major tourist destinations such as Tarragona, Reus or Salou, the area along the Ebro river, handsome old cities such as Tortosa and Montblanc, and venerable old monasteries like Poblet and Santes Creus.

The hinterland is dotted with still more centuries-old cities with historic buildings and long-established markets, such as Vic, Manresa, Cardona, Igualada, Terrassa, Sabadell, and Granollers. There are scenic mountain areas too, including Montseny, Les Guilleries and Montserrat. Lleida is the capital of western Catalonia, a region of great cultural, architectural and commercial importance, with a flourishing agriculture—notably fruit orchards—and a prestigious cuisine. The Pyrenees stretch along Catalonia’s northern border. Many of the country’s finest Romanesque buildings are located here, as well as winter sports facilities and natural parks. At the far western tip of the Pyrenees is the Val d’Aran, a region of Occitanian language and culture. The chief town, Vielha, is a prominent winter sports centre.

The Castell dels Tres Dragons (Barcelona)

The hill of Montjuic, a blend of city-planning, art and sport

The Area of the Fòrum de les Cultures, where Avinguda Diagonal meets the sea
CATALONIA: A SPECTACULAR SETTING

With its beautiful and varied scenery, its sunlit, colourful cities, the distinctive styles of artists such as Gaudí, Dalí or Miró, and its unrivalled location — straddling the border between North and South —, Catalonia has everything it takes to develop a strong cultural identity but one that is fully immersed in our increasingly interdependent world. The taste for beauty, the love of poetry, a long tradition of cultural creativity, and the solid aesthetic and technical background of the musicians, writers and other workers of the Catalan audiovisual industry have made our country one of the most attractive and sought-after settings for 21st century creators.

Music to suit the tastes of the new millennium

The promotional videoclip for the song “Vertigo”, a track on the disc How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb by the Irish group U2, shows a strange, desert-like surface, decomposed by visual effects. This setting belongs to the Punta del Fangar, a sandy peninsula with an area of over 400 hectares on the north shore of the Ebro Delta. Plenty of other Catalan landscapes and emblematic Catalan personalities have also inspired prestigious creations of popular culture: the album Gaudí (1987), for instance, by the symphonic rock group The Alan Parsons Project, which contains songs such as “La Sagrada Familia” or “Paseo de Gracia” and was inspired by the life and works of the brilliant architect; or the conceptual disc The Waking Hour (1984) by the duo Dali’s Car, whose members came from the Bauhaus and Japan groups (Tell me man, like or not / My time is short and soon / I’ll take your clock for Dali’s car / Take you spinning in the room, from the song “Dali’s Car”).

But Catalonia’s greatest impact on present-day popular music stems from phenomena such as the Nova Cançó movement which is of great importance in Romance-language countries and Latin America, thanks primarily to singers such as Joan Manuel Serrat —who is idolized in the Southern Cone countries—, Luís Llach and Raimon —who make frequent appearances in France and Italy—, and Maria del Mar Bonet —one of the “divas” of Mediterranean song. Other significant factors are the vitality of the Barcelona music scene in the early 21st century —featuring the group Ojos de Brujo (flamenco-hip-hop-Catalan rumba-funk), Macaco, Dusminguet, and others— and recording experiments such as the Barcelona Raval Sessions (2003), a splendid reflection of the city’s multicultural pulse.

One last crucial factor is the fact that many internationally famous musicians have chosen Barcelona as their long-term, or even permanent, home: Manu Chao, a former member of Mano Negra, the Brazilian Walter Pa, the American singer and composer Jackson Brown, the pianist Brad Meldhau (who was accompanied for many years by the Catalan percussionist Jordi Rossy), the jazz organist Lou Bennett, and the Cuban singer Lucrecia.

Catalonia, right on the border between north and south, open to all influences and capable of integrating them into a cultural discourse of its own, is currently one of the laboratories in which the musical tastes of the new millennium are taking shape.
Catalonia as a literary space

The mystic and philosopher Ramon Llull (1232-1315) was the first great writer in the Catalan language and played a particularly important role in European culture. As early as the 15th century, the Valencian Joaot Martorell wrote the great novel of chivalry, Tirant lo Blanc (The White Knight) which, as Cervantes acknowledged, exerted widespread influence. Cervantes himself chose Barcelona and other parts of Catalonia as the literary backcloth to Don Quixote's last adventures.

Catalonia as a literary space, however, is dedicated to it and the action of novels such as La febre d'or by Narcís Oller (1846-1930) or Josep M. de Sagarra’s Vida Privada takes place there. The shady Barri Xino and the Avinguda Paral·lel are described by French writers such as Carco, Bourget, Pierre de Mandiargues or Jean Genet while the mountainous Garrotxa region. Impudà (The Wild Knife) is set in Vic, and Marià Vayreda’s La punyalada takes place in the mountainous Garrotxa region.

When Fructuós Gelabert, the pioneer Catalan film-maker, shot “Sortida dels treballadors de la fàbrica Espanya Industrial” (Workers leaving the Espanya Industrial factory) in 1897, he was marking Barcelona’s debut as a film set. After the Second World War, Hollywood disembarked on the Costa Brava in the person of director Alben Lewin who filmed Pandora and the Flying Dutchman (starring Ava Gardner, James Mason and the Catalan actor and bullfighter Marius Cabrè) there in 1951. In 1959 much of Suddenly, Last Summer, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz and starring Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift, was shot at Begur and Pals. The Avinguda Paral·lel and the now vanished gypsy quarter of Somorrostro provided the setting for Los Tarantos (1963), a film by F. Rovira Velera with Carmen Amaya and Antonio Gades in the leading roles, which won an Oscar for the best foreign-language film. In 1965, Orson Welles chose Cardona Castle as one of the settings for Chimes at Midnight.

Episodes from more recent history and the Civil War are portrayed in settings that include Gelida in Jaime Caminó’s Las largas vacaciones del 36 (The Long Holidays of 1936, 1976). The period when Barcelona was known as the “Rose of Fire” is evoked in films such as La ciutat cremada (The Burnt City, 1976), by Antoni Ribas, and Un hombre llamado Flor de Otoño (A Man Called Autumn Flower, 1978), by Pedro Olea.

Nowadays — notably from the 1992 Olympics onwards — Barcelona and many other Catalan localities have become much sought-after settings for film and television productions and suitable locations for a wide range of advertising spots. Evidence of this is provided by films such as Ken Loach’s Land and Freedom (1995), Pedro Almodóvar’s Todo sobre mi madre (All About My Mother, 1999), the urban comedies of Ventura Pons, or the documentary En construcció (2001) by José Luis Guerín. Catalonia has been an attractive cinematographic setting for many renowned filmmakers, including the American director Woody Allen. Fulfilling his promise to film a movie in Barcelona, he has converted the Catalan capital into the setting for one of his most recent projects. All these cinematographic productions put a spotlight on the Catalan countryside, culture, architecture and society, which thousands of moviegoers will see all over the world.

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No feature of a country tells you more about its identity than its traditional popular festivals. Catalonia’s festive calendar is packed with events all year round. It also has an established tradition of civic festivities. The most famous is the feast of Sant Jordi, held on 23 April, when the streets fill up with book and flower stalls. This festival has won recognition from Unesco, which declared it International Book Day. The other great civic festival is 11 September, the Catalan national holiday. The Patum of Berga festival was also included in the Unesco World Heritage Humanity list in 2005.

Since the 19th century, teams of Catalans of all ages and classes have gathered to build spectacular human towers, or “castells”. Their motto is “strength, balance, courage and sense”. Today this tradition remains very much alive. Human towers are strongly identified with the Camp de Tarragona and Penedès regions, though in recent years they have gained widespread popularity in many other parts of Catalonia.
Folklore and traditions

In summer many localities celebrate their festa major, or local festival. Several items invariably appear on the agenda: sardana-dancing — the sardana is Catalonia’s most popular dance — or jotes — a dance proper to the Terres de l’Ebre —; “giants” — figures over three metres tall with a wooden structure inside that enables people to carry them — and dwarfs; firework displays and all-night dancing to the sound of the latest music.

Festivals with an identity

Catalonia’s national day, on 11 September, commemorates the date on which the siege of Barcelona by the troops of Spanish king Philip V came to a tragic end in 1714. This was the last episode in the War of Succession, which led to the loss of Catalonia’s national freedoms. The great spring festival is Sant Jordi, dedicated to Saint George, Catalonia’s patron saint. On this day both friends and lovers give each other gifts of books and roses.

Festivals of fire

Fire is probably one of Catalonia’s most ancient and important signs of identity. One example is the eve of the feast of Saint John (24 June), when great bonfires are lit in the squares and streets of villages, towns and cities and Catalans celebrate the summer solstice all night long to the sound of music, rockets and fireworks. Fire and gunpowder are part of many other Catalan festivals too and numerous local festivals include a correfoc, a parade featuring fantastic fire-spitting beasts and hangers and led by “devils”. The Patum of Berga is one of the festivals most associated with fire, celebrated on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Catalan exports merrymaking

Catalonia’s great festive tradition is constantly evolving and in recent years many of the leading drama groups that perform in our streets and squares have designed festive events for major international gatherings. Comediants and La Fura dels Baus are currently the foremost creators of new forms of collective merrymaking.
The Catalan label of origin

Catalonia’s most famous and characteristic culinary speciality is pa amb tomàquet (bread rubbed with tomato and olive oil), which is often served with excellent home-produced pork sausages. Other dishes include: escudella i carn d’olla, a hearty winter stew; xató, a salad typical of southern Catalonia; calçots, tender onion shoots dipped in salvitxada sauce; caragols a la llauina (roast snails), escalivada (char-broiled vegetables), and coca de recapte (reminiscent of pizza).

Besides preparing nourishing and tasty traditional Mediterranean dishes, many Catalan chefs have excelled in recent years as veritable researchers into the country’s raw materials and the creators of a successful blend of traditional and innovative cookery. Their recipes have won the highest international prestige.
Traditional sausages

Pa amb tomaquet, a tradition of Catalan cookery

Panellets, a typical autumn dessert

Traditional cookery

Catalan gastronomy, like so many aspects of our country, arose out of popular wisdom and tradition. Geographically speaking one can distinguish two main styles of cookery: that of the mountains and hinterland, predominated by meat and sausages, produce of the dairy, market garden and farmyard, game, and mushrooms; and that of the coast, featuring fish and seafood, often accompanied by rice and vegetables. Catalonia also has countless mouth-watering sweets and deserts. One of the most popular is crema catalana, with burnt sugar and caramel. Each town and village has its own specialities and many sweets are prepared for particular liturgical feastdays: torró—such as that made in Agramunt—for Christmas, mones for Easter, coques de Sant Joan at midsummer, and panellets and chestnuts for All Saints.

Cookery and innovation

Guides and critics all over the world consider that Catalan cuisine is currently experiencing a veritable “golden age”. Catalan restaurateurs include some of the world’s most prestigious names, such as Ferran Adrià, Joan Roca, Carme Ruscalleda, Santi Santamaria and Carles Gaig, all veritable geniuses of avant-garde cuisine. Catalonia also has schools of gastronomy—the one at the Mercat de la Boqueria in Barcelona, and the Aula Gastronòmica de l’Empordà—and research organizations such as the Laboratori de Cuina, the Alícia centre (Nutrition and Science) at Sant Benet de Bages, or the Sent Soví chair at the University of Barcelona. Every other year the Fira de Barcelona is the venue for Alimentaria, one of the leading European salons for the food and agriculture industry and the catering trade.

Wine and cava

Wine is another key feature of any Catalan meal. Vines have been grown all over the country for countless centuries and wine is produced under eleven regional labels of origin. Cava sparkling wine has its own label of origin. Prepared by the traditional method in the Penedès, Terra Alta and Conca de Barberà regions, it is one of the country’s leading exports. The introduction of leading-edge enological techniques has raised certain Catalan wines—notably Priorat and Montsant—to the viticultural forefront.
Natural parks and protected areas

www.parcsdecatalunya.net
www.diba.cat/parcs
www.valldenuria.cat
P. N. d'Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici 973 624 036
P. N. del Cadí-Moixeró i Pedraforca 938 244 151
P. N. de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa 972 464 012
P. N. dels Àiguamolls de l'Empordà 972 454 222
P. N. Alt Pirineu 973 622 335
P. N. del Delta de l'Ebre 977 482 181
P. N. de la Muntanya de Montserrat 938 777 777
P. N. del Montseny 938 475 102
P. N. de Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac 938 318 350
P. N. de Garraf 935 971 819
P. N. del Montnegre-Corredor 938 679 452
P. N. del Cap de Creus 972 193 191
P. N. dels Ports 977 504 012
P. N. Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter 972 751 701
P. N. de la Serra de Collserola 932 803 552
P. C. del Castell de Montesquiu 972 266 012
P. C. d’Olerdola 935 971 819
Paratge Natural de Poblet 977 871 732
Paratge Natural de l’Àlbera 972 545 079
Espai Protegit de la Vall de Núria 972 732 020
Reserva Natural del Delta del Llobregat 934 793 201

Water parks, theme parks, amusement parks

Aqua Brava-Roses 972 254 344
Aquadiver-Platja d’Aro 972 828 283
WaterWorld-Lloret de Mar 972 368 613
Ilìa Fantasia-Vilassar de Mar 937 514 553
Aqualòpolis-La Pineda 902 345 011
Marineland-Palafolls 937 654 802
Aquarena-Albinyana 977 687 654

Golf courses

Federació Catalana de Golf 934 145 262
PIRINEUS
Club de Golf Campodon 972 130 125
Reial Club de Golf de Cerdanya 972 141 408
Club de Golf Fontanals de Cerdanya 972 144 374
Aravell Golf. La Seu d’Urgell 973 360 066
Club de Golf Ribera Salada-Selsoña 973 299 282
Golf Sant Marc. Puigcerdà 972 883 411
COSTA BRAVA
Club de Golf d’Aro-Mas Nou de Platja d’Aro 972 826 900
Club de Golf Costa Brava-Santa Cristina d’Aro 972 837 150
Club de Golf Platja de Pals 972 667 739
Club de Golf Girona-Sant Julià de Ramis 972 171 641
Club de Golf l’Àngel de Lloret 972 368 533
Empordà Golf Resort-Gualta 972 760 450
Club de Golf Peralada 972 538 287
Club de Golf Torremirona-Navelles 972 553 737
PGA Golf de Catalunya-Caldes de Malavella 972 472 577
Golf Serres de Pals-Pals 972 637 375
Golf Mas Pagès- Sant Esteve de Guialbes 972 561 001
CATALUNYA CENTRAL
Club de Golf Montanyà 938 840 170
Club de Golf Vallromanes 935 729 064
Club de Golf Sant Cugat 936 743 908
Club de Golf de Barcelona 937 728 800
Club de Golf Can Bosch-Sant Feliu de Codines 936 663 096
Club de Golf La Mola-Maladreta 937 300 516
Club de Golf Montblanc-Montblanc 937 449 168
Golf de Caldes-Caldes de Montbui 938 626 265
Golf Sant Joan-Rubi 936 753 050
Golf La Requeta-Castellgali 938 331 328
Club de Golf Castellterçol 679 757 335
Real Club de Golf El Prat-Terrassa 938 281 000
Golf La Garriga 938 612 751
Club de Golf Taradell 938 126 678
Club de Golf Vilablau 938 444 886
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Club de Golf Aiguasverds-Reus 977 752 725
Club de Golf Bonmont - Mont-roig del Camp 977 818 140
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TERRES DE LLEIDA
Raimat Golf Club-Lleida 973 737 539

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www.portaventura.es
Catalunya en Miniatura-Torretles de Llobregat 936 895 960
www.catalunyaenminiatura.com
Poble Espanyol-Barcelona 935 086 300
www.poble-espanyol.com
Parc Zoològic de Barcelona 932 254 780
www.aquariumbcn.com
Aqüarium de Barcelona 932 217 474
Parc d’Atraccions Tibidabo-Barcelona 932 117 942
www.tibidabo.cat

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Club de Golf la Graiera-Català 977 168 032
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Raimat Golf Club-Lleida 973 737 539

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El Port de la Selva www.cnps.es 972 387 000
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Empuriabrava www.empuriabrava.com 972 451 239
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Llafranc www.nauticllafranc.net 972 300 754
Marina Palmós www.lamarinapalmos.es 972 601 000
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Port Olímpic www.pobasa.es 932 259 220
Barcelona www.rcnb.com 932 216 521
Barcelona www.maritimbarcelona.org 932 214 859
Barcelona www.portvallbcn.com 933 176 135
Badalona www.marinabadalona-sa.es 933 207 500
Sant Adrià de Besòs www.portforum.com 933 562 725

COSTA DAURADA
Port Segur www.portsegurcalafell.com 977 159 119
Coma-ruga www.clubnautic.com 977 486 184
Tarragona www.portesportiutarragona.com 977 213 100
Torredembarra www.port-torredembarra.es 977 643 234
Salou www.clubnauticsalou.com 977 382 164
Cambrils www.clubnauticcambrils.com 977 360 531
L’Hospital de l’Infant www.cnhv.net 977 823 004

TERRES DE L’EBRE
Port Calafat www.portcalafat.cat 977 486 184
L’Ametlla de Mar www.cnametllamar.com 977 456 180
L’Ampolla www.nauticsaragossa.com 977 440 215
Sant Carles de la Ràpita www.cnscr.com 977 741 103
Les Cases d’Alcanar www.cnportcasesd’alcanar.com 977 735 001
Sant Jordi d’Alfama 977 486 189

Activity tourism and adventure sports
Ara Lleida-Patronat de Turisme Terres de Lleida www.lleidatur.org 973 245 408
Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava-Girona www.costabrava.org 972 208 401
Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Tarragona www.costaudara.info 977 230 312
Diputació de Barcelona-Turisme www.turismepropbarcelona.cat 934 022 970
Torisme Val d’Aran www.visitharden.com 973 640 688

Ski resorts
Associació Catalana d’Estacions d’Esqui i Activitats de Muntanya (ACEMI)
www.catneu.net
Federació Catalana d’Esports d’Hivern www.fch.cat 934 155 544

DOWNHILL SKIING
Baqueira Beret www.baqueira.cat 973 639 010
Bai-Tauill Resort www.boitauliresort.com 902 406 640
Gran Pallars. Esport Esquí www.granpallars.com 973 624 058
La Molina www.lamolina.cat 972 892 031
Masella www.masella.cat 972 444 700
Gran Pallars. Port Ainé www.granpallars.com 902 190 152
Port del Comte www.portdelcomte.net 973 492 301

Tavascan www.tavascan.net 973 623 079
Val d’Núria www.valdenuria.cat 972 732 026

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING
Aransa www.aransaski.cat 973 293 051
Bosc Vilos www.boscoldesiowej.com 973 622 201
Guils Fontanera www.guils.com 972 197 047
Lles www.lles.net 973 293 049
Sant Joan de l’Erm www.santjoandelerm.com 973 298 015
TuiXén-La Vansa www.tuixen-lavansa.com 973 370 030