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## DELICIOUS CITIES

## Barcelona

You'll never go hungry in Barcelona. Food is more important than religion in the Catalan capital — some say it is religion. You'll notice the obsession piled high in the *mercados*, in the traditional *tapas* joints in Barceloneta and in the edgy gourmet quarter of El Barri, north of Avinguda del Paral·lel. And you're sure to see it in the faces of Barcelonans, who treat every meal as an affirmation of the good life. As they say here, '*No hi ha alegria amb la panxa buida*' — there's no joy with an empty stomach. Seasonal highlights include winter's *calçots* — chargrilled spring onions served with a spicy tomato sauce — and fava beans, best eaten in the springtime stew *habas a la Catalana*.

**The must-try:** *Pa amb tomàquet* — bread, olive oil and crushed tomato are the holy trinity of Barcelonan food. Try it at Cal Pep (Plaça de les Olles 8; calpep.com; £1.75), the stalwart that inspired London's Barrafinà.

**The blow-out meal:** The hottest ticket in Barcelona — and deservedly so — is

Albert Adrià's Enigma (enigmaconcept.es; set menu £193), in a former office building that looks like East Berlin outside and a *Star Wars* set inside. Expect 37 extraordinary courses more grown-up than the shock-and-awe Albert's brother Ferran once served at El Bulli. Too avant-garde? Book a long *tapas*-style lunch at Bodega 1900 — another Adrià joint in El Barri, serving gourmet interpretations of classic Catalan cuisine (bodega1900.com; mains about £10).

**The brilliant bargain:** In the Gràcia district, Marc Casadament runs a tiny caff called Blavis (restaurantblavis.com; mains about £5) that has got Barcelona's foodie types blathering about the daily changing, market-fresh menu served to the 18 lucky punters who can squeeze in. Dishes might include squid with rice, grilled pork with *teriyaki*, and gorgeous *morcilla*. Elsewhere, try the hole-in-the-wall Quimet y Quimet for its gourmet *montadito* open sandwiches (Carrer del Poeta Cabanyes 25; from £2).

**The top tippie:** Forget the city-centre tourist traps and head instead to the Eixample and the Carrer d'Aribau — aka Cocktail Avenue. Start with homemade craft beers at the Garage Beer Co (Carrer de Consell de Cent), then crawl up Aribau to end at the pleasure palace

that is Solange Cocktails & Luxury Spirits (Carrer d'Aribau 143), where Miguel Pérez mixes the perfect poison.

**The takeaway:** Leave plenty of space in your luggage. You'll want olive oil from Les Garrigues; high-wattage reds from Priorat; Cava from Penedès; *butifarra negra* (blood sausage) from the Alt Empordà; Puigpedrós cow's cheese from Cerdanya and goat's cheese from Formatges Cuirols. Get it all at the Mercat del Ninot (Carrer de Mallorca 133) or Mercat de Santa Caterina (Avinguda de Francesc Cambó 16).

**The tour:** Take a three-and-a-half-hour, Cava-soaked guided tour of Gràcia, visiting the market and popping into little shops and bars to learn the history and culture of Catalan cuisine. Private tours start at 9.30am, Monday to Friday, and 10am on Saturday (devour barcelonafoodtours.com; £65pp).

**Get me there:** Ryanair (ryanair.com) has Stansted returns from £44. Stay at We Boutique, a restored Modernista house at the less touristy northern edge of El Born (webboutiquehotel.com; doubles from £104, room only). EasyJet (easyjet.com/en/holidays) has three nights in the three-star Hotel Condado, in the Eixample district, from £223, room only, including flights.  
Chris Haslam

