

# Native tips for the EMWA Spring Conference in Barcelona

by *Santiago Rosales*

To help you plan ahead for a pleasant stay during the EMWA Barcelona Spring Conference, here are some tips on how to move around, what to do and what to see in your free time in case you want to prolong your stay for a few days after the Conference.

## General information

This is the official site of the City of Barcelona: <http://www.bcn.cat/english/ihome.htm>.

Barcelona is a dense city, for it is located between the sea and a hill (the Tibidabo). This has one advantage: you can walk easily from the upper part of the city down to the harbour in a couple of hours or less.

Downtown Barcelona, the '*Ciutat Vella*' (the 'Old City') is probably the most popular area for tourists to visit (and natives to wander around); it is always full of life, a place for small shopping, dining out, enjoying street music players etc. The area is surrounded by the remains of the old city walls built by the Romans; the well known Gothic Quarter and the *Rambla de les Flors* are there.

Other busy areas worth walking around are the *Passeig de Gracia* and the *Rambla de Catalunya*, the two parallel boulevards where you find exclusive shops and some of the many noteworthy examples of the 'Modernista' architecture in Barcelona.

## Hotels

The venue for the Spring Conference (Hotel Rey Juan Carlos I) is somewhat apart from downtown. See the small map below to get a notion of locations. Barcelona is a popular city, so make sure you book well in advance. For those looking for an intimate atmosphere, there are three, four, and five star small, cosy places to stay in the heart of the Gothic Quarter if you so prefer... and if there are vacancies (Hotel Neri <http://www.hotelneri.com> is one of them but not the only one).

For further details, see 'Accommodation', at: <http://www.bcn.es/guia/welcomea.html>

## Transport

### From Barcelona Airport to the Conference venue:

- The fastest and easiest way is to take a taxi. It may take around 20 minutes (30-35 € approx.) depending on the traffic density.
- There is a train, running every 30 minutes from Barcelona Airport to downtown. Get off at Barcelona Sants Station; then take the *Metro* (Underground), Line 3 (Green Line) to the last stop '*Zona Universitaria*'.

The hotel is 2 minutes walking from there. It takes around 40 minutes (9 € approx.)

- Take the Aerobus (3.90 €), the blue bus from Airport to *Plaza Catalunya* running every 6 minutes most of the time. Get off at the *Plaza Catalunya* and take the *Metro*, line 3 (green) to the last stop '*Zona Universitaria*'. It may take about the same time as by train, depending on how fast the traffic is.

### From Girona Airport:

For those flying with a low cost airline landing in Girona Airport (coded as "Barcelona (Girona) GRO"), here is how to find your way to downtown Barcelona:

<http://www.barcelona-tourist-guide.com/en/gerona/girona-airport-barcelona.html>

Girona Airport is becoming a busy airport because of its proximity to the beautiful beaches of the *Costa Brava*. It takes a bit longer than one hour by highway to get to Barcelona.

### From the Conference venue to downtown (*Plaza de Catalunya*):

Note that *Plaza de Catalunya* is in the heart of Barcelona. From here you can walk up to *Passeig de Gracia* or down to *Rambla de les Flors* and the Gothic Quarter.

Buses 67 and 68 run both ways between *Plaza de Catalunya* to the Rey Juan Carlos I Hotel as does the Green Line Metro (Line 3), but consider the possibility of moving around by hiring a bike and using the bike paths in some of the Barcelona streets (see: [http://www.bcn.es/bicicleta/en/moute\\_manual.html](http://www.bcn.es/bicicleta/en/moute_manual.html)). As an average, it may take an enjoyable half an hour to cycle from *Plaza Catalunya* to Rey Juan Carlos I Hotel, and about 10 minutes from *Plaza Catalunya* to the Barcelona beach.

## Visiting the city

I can't tell you more than what you will find at: [http://www.bcn.es/turisme/english/turisme/vis\\_hom\\_fr.htm](http://www.bcn.es/turisme/english/turisme/vis_hom_fr.htm)

## Beaches

Yes, there are beaches in Barcelona. Of course you will not be alone... but at least they are not far. For those who like sunbathing and have the time, just take the bus, get off by the seashore and start walking on the sand.

## Nature

If you like walking in the midst of nature, not far, but away from buildings, the Collserola Park, at the Tibidabo Mountain, might be the place to go. Have a look at: [http://www.bcn.es/turisme/english/turisme/rutes/colls\\_fr.htm](http://www.bcn.es/turisme/english/turisme/rutes/colls_fr.htm)

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- Venue of the Spring Conference
- The Old City: Gothic Quarter, Rambla de les Flors, Old Harbour
- ▬ Passeig de Gracia and Rambla de Catalunya
- ▬ Beaches and Olympic Harbour
- ▲ Peak of the Tibidabo mountain

### Sightseeing

Don't miss:

- The XIII century gothic church *Santa Maria del Mar* (<http://www.bcn.es/turisme/english/turisme/llocs/10.htm>),
- The Gaudi and Modernism architecture (<http://www.rutadelmodernisme.com/default.aspx?Idioma=en>)
- The Picasso Museum ([http://www.museupicasso.bcn.es/eng/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.museupicasso.bcn.es/eng/index_eng.htm))

The Santa Maria del Mar church and the Picasso Museum are only about 100-150 meters apart.

### Entertainment

Visiting <http://www.timeout.com/barcelona/> will tell you everything going on in the city. You may not want to waste your time in such places as 'Tablaos Flamencos' and so forth.

Lovers of classical music may want to visit:

<http://www.whatbarcelona.com/classical-music-barcelona.html>

Buy tickets and see programmed concerts in the three main concert halls at:

- *El Liceo* (mainly opera): [http://www.liceubarcelona.com/teatre\\_liceu.asp](http://www.liceubarcelona.com/teatre_liceu.asp)
- *Palau de la Música*: <http://www.palaumusica.org/>
- *L'Auditori*: <http://www.auditori.org/>

### Trips outside the city

Spanish Trails Adventures claims to be a unique trip planning and guide service for active travellers looking for the perfect day trip or extended escape into exciting Catalonia. See <http://www.spanish-trails.com>.

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## Eating and Drinking in Barcelona

Santiago Rosales suggests staying away from the very touristy restaurants ('Las 7 Puertas' is one of them: most of the days, the main entrance has long lines of tourists waiting patiently for their turn to enter...) but Mary Ellen Kerans says it's fine for a late week night or an early supper when other restaurants haven't opened yet or you don't have reservations. Santiago says there are a number of good restaurants downtown but also near the Old Harbour (*Port Vell*), Olympic Harbour (*Port Olimpic*) or by the beach.

### Catalan cuisine restaurants

The following are a list of Catalan cuisine restaurants Karen Shashok has eaten at and liked (about 30 euros without wine):

- Semproniana
- Pitarra
- La Bodega
- Boix de la Cerdanya
- Petra
- Restaurante Casa Jordi
- Los Caracoles (for those who want a total immersion experience in local atmosphere; best to go on an off day when there will be fewer tourists)

### A bit cheaper and less Catalan:

- Restaurante Pla dels Angels (near the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo)
- La Gran Tasca

### Tapas

The Catalan concept of tapas is different from the rest of Spain's as explained in the following link. Mary Ellen and Karen recommend Ciudad Condal which is mentioned in this article and Mary Ellen also recommends the Cerveceria Catalan. Cal Pep has unfortunately closed. <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/barcelona/0045025170.html>.

### Best restaurant in the world

The *El Bulli* restaurant, which is situated approximately two hours north of Barcelona, was voted the best restaurant in the world by the *Restaurant Magazine* in 2002. Chances of getting a table there are hopeless as you need to book at least 6 months ahead. But the chef, Ferran Adria, recently gave an interview in the *Guardian* in which he gave some tips for shopping (including the famous ham) and eating in Barcelona. He warns that fish is more expensive in Spain than anywhere else in the world but recommends Rias de Galicia as the best fish restaurant in town.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2007/dec/22/insiderguides.barcelona>

### Cocktails

Barcelona is an amazing city for cocktails, says Ferran Adria, who mentions some bars in his article. One of them is Boadas, which I liked when I visited it with Karen.

Boadas: <http://travel.nytimes.com/travel/guides/europe/spain/catalonia/barcelona/attraction-detail.html?vid=1154654658384>

### Palau de la Música Catalana

Mary Ellen says this is a must see place and I agree with her. It is art nouveau from the same architect as Sant Pau Hospital. Mary Ellen adds that it has a good tapas bar. It's practically empty and quiet just before intermissions, then fills with people and empties again suddenly. Great people watching.

Put together by Elise Langdon-Neuner from information provided by Santiago Rosales, Mary Ellen Kerans and Karen Shashok.

## For a great conference in Barcelona—Spanish style without so much reading



According to Hachette's pocket guide, *A Great Weekend in Barcelona*, of all the nationalities in Europe the Spanish read the least number of books per head. Barcelona is, however, the centre of the publishing industry in Spain. This guidebook also mentions that Papirvum (at Baixada de la Llibreteria; Metro Jaume I) sells hand-made paper, boxes and diaries lined with iridescent marbled paper.

These are exclusive to the shop and unique in the city. Papirvum is just one of the many small speciality shops typical for the city, which also has 41 covered markets. The guide gives many useful tips on shopping, as well as sightseeing, nightlife and places to eat in Barcelona.

## TWS Editorial Board Meeting in Barcelona

Anybody interested in contributing to *TWS* or shaping it's future is very welcome to attend the Editorial Board Meeting which will be held at the Barcelona conference at breakfast time on Friday 2 May. Room details will be given at the conference.

## Barcelona's notion of direction

Barcelona has an 'up' and a 'down' (but not an 'uptown' and 'downtown' like New York). Up is the 'mountain' side of any street or square and down is called the 'sea' side: *mar i muntanya* is the order of naming them in Catalan. There's no east or west but rather a right and left. Left is to your left as you're looking at the mountain (Tibidabo, great views on a fine day). Right is to the right, roughly north-northeast, but the compass is irrelevant in Barcelona. The right *Eixample* (nineteenth-century enlargement) is where two important art nouveau sights are—Gaudí's Sagrada Família and Sant Pau (a pavilion hospital by Domènech i Muntaner, also the architect of the Palau de la Música Catalana).

The other essential concept for getting your bearings in Barcelona is the Gothic Quarter vs the *Eixample*—the new quarter, opened up by the architect Cerdà outside the medieval walls. The boundary between the old and new parts is the Plaça Catalunya.

Thanks to Mary Ellen Kerans for this contribution.

## A very special opportunity for EMWA musical instrument players in Barcelona

*EMWA* members who play an instrument have a very special opportunity for some fun during their stay in Barcelona. They are invited to play along with an amateur string orchestra at one of their rehearsal sessions (on Tuesdays, 8 pm).

Our "Ars Medica Orchestra" is an amateur orchestra sponsored by the Barcelona Physicians Organization, but players also include chemical engineers, translators, teachers, businessmen, etc. Some players are of German origin and live in Barcelona. Anyone who plays a string or wind instrument is very welcome to join us for some fun together in a relaxed and informal setting. Please contact Santiago Rosales at 8945srv@comb.es for more details and a copy of the scores.

## Rambla

A 'Rambla' is a pedestrian boulevard of sorts that is tree lined and shady—taking advantage of fertile ground and abundant water because it runs along the natural rainwater course of the city. The word comes from *ramla*, the Arabic word for just such a seasonal watercourse. Most traditionally laid out Catalan towns, especially along the coast just north of Barcelona have a Rambla that the locals call such—even when it's not the official name of the street. *Las Ramblas* refers to the walk from Plaça Catalunya down to the port. Above Plaça Catalunya, the Rambla de Catalunya offers a good place to appreciate the nineteenth-century *Eixample* district. There are many cafés on the newer Rambla, but its upper part is unfortunately in the midst of a major construction project at present.

Thanks to Mary Ellen Kerans for this contribution.

## Would you like to cut costs and share a room at the Barcelona Conference?

Are you keen on staying in the conference hotel, but cannot afford or are unwilling to pay the full cost of a hotel room containing two beds? The "Share-a-room" scheme allows *EMWA* members to find another member willing to share a room and therefore split the cost of the room. Please submit the following details to Head Office (info@emwa.org) who will contact you if they have a potential match.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Smoking:  No  Yes  
 Sex:  Male  Female  
 Date of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of departure: \_\_\_\_\_