

Exploring Barcelona, Spain: A Disney Cruise Line Port Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

All of the Disney Cruise Line home ports share one thing in common -- they're stunning cities, with lots to explore, either before or after a cruise.

So I have to hesitate when I say that we've left the best until last in this [series of articles](#) on Disney Cruise Line's home ports.

We finish up with Barcelona, Spain, which has been the home port for Disney's Mediterranean cruises since they started visiting Europe in 2007. We were fortunate to be on the inaugural sailing from Barcelona all those years ago, and if I say that, since then, we've made two return visits back to the city to see everything that it has to offer, then you get the idea of how much there is to see and do there.

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□ So where on earth do you start with a city like Barcelona? I'm going to start with the absolute stand out for me, which is Sagrada Familia. If you think, like me, you've seen churches, then you're in for a surprise here, as this is nothing like any other church in the world. For starters, they're still working on it, and they will be for some time to come. This is architect Antoni Gaudi's unfinished masterpiece, and it really is a jaw-dropping sight. Take one look at the Nativity Façade, the most complete part of the church exterior, and you realise why it's going to take so many years to complete. The detail in it is just staggering, and that's just the exterior! Be warned that this is an exceptionally popular place to visit, and there can be long waits to get tickets to get inside.

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□ Gaudi's influence can be seen elsewhere in the city, most notably in Casa Batllo, a block of flats, and Park Guell on the northern edge of the city, with its superb views over Barcelona. I think, with Gaudi's style of architecture, you either love it or hate it, as it's quite bizarre to say the least. However, his colorful style, and use of animals, such as dragons, in his work has led to a thriving tourist industry of mini-replicas. We come home with plenty of these after our various visits to the city. While you can visit Sagrada Familia and say you've seen Gaudi's work, there is so much more to see in both Casa Batllo and Park Guell. If you have children, you'll love the park, as it's a great place for them to let off some steam, while if you're interested in buildings, Casa Batllo will fascinate you, as you won't believe some of the things Gaudi came up with when creating this.

Something else that most first timers to Barcelona will have heard of is La Rambla, the historic avenue that runs through the center of the city from the harbor. Everyone wants to wander along this, although to be honest, pleasant as it was, we found ourselves conscious of our surroundings all the time, and wary of bag snatchers or pick pockets, sadly an all too common occurrence here. We had a nice enough dinner at a restaurant along La Rambla one night, although as in most places, you pay for the location, and we could have got a much better deal a street or two over.

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□ While first time visitors may know some of the main sights to see, one of the absolute delights for us was the Museu d'Historia de la Ciutat or the museum of the city's history, which takes you underground for a tour of the ruins of Roman Barcelona. This barely merited a mention in my guidebook, but we loved this atmospheric return to a couple of millennia earlier, and found it fascinating. We've thoroughly recommended it to everyone we've known since who's gone to Barcelona, as it's definitely well worth a visit.

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□ Another part of the city that's worth a visit is Montjuic, located on a hill overlooking the city near the cruise port. It has some famous festivals to thank for its popularity today, not least the 1992 Summer Olympics, which centered here. The main Olympic Stadium can still be visited, but also worth a visit is the Poble Espanyol, or Spanish Village. As the name suggests, it showcases Spanish architecture, with more than 100 houses to visit, and was created for the 1929 International Fair. We were pleasantly surprised by how much there is to see here, and as a result, spent much longer there than we originally planned.

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□ What else should you see in the city itself? Barcelona Cathedral, while nowhere near as breathtaking as La Sagrada Familia, is well worth a visit, and art lovers will want to head to Montjuic to see the Fundacio Joan Miro and the Museo Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (museum of Catalan art), while soccer fans may want to pay homage at the home of Barcelona football club, the famed Nou Camp.

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□ On one of our return visits to the area, we headed a little further out to the monastery at Montserrat. We were lucky enough to be driving, which meant we could park at the base of the rack railway that takes visitors up to the mountaintop monastery. I know from a Disney friend who was in Barcelona recently that getting there on your own is not the easiest thing to do, and she thoroughly recommended getting an organised tour after her experiences. All I'll say is that it's worth the trouble it takes to get there, as this place is just amazing. Literally perched on a mountain, it's quite a sight (and quite a view of the surroundings). It's a sprawling complex, meaning you can easily spend a

few hours there (I know, as we did it!) with no problem.

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□How better to wrap up a series of articles on the home ports of call for Disney Cruise Line than with Barcelona? There are good reasons why it constantly comes either top, or near to the top, in surveys of the world's best cities to visit. Just be sure to allow enough time to see everything. Even with three visits under our belts now, I can't claim to have seen everything. Hmm -- does that sound familiar at all?

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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