UNDISCOVERED SPAIN TOURS - BARCELONA

VISIT OFF-ROAD VILLAGES, TOWNS AND LANDSCAPE

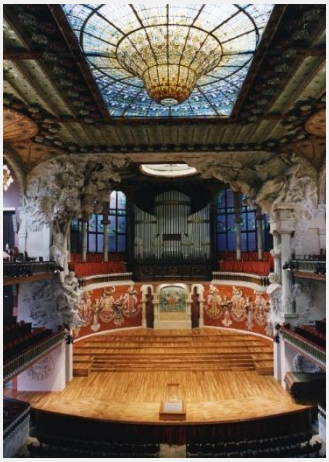
NATURE, CULTURAL HERITAGE, GASTRONOMY

DAY 1) AIRPORT - BARCELONA- 16 miles

Upon arrival and after crossing passport and customs control, the Gamma Tours representative will welcome you. Then you board the motor coach and you head to the hotel.
Welcome Dinner will be served in a local restaurant founded in the 19th C. Return to the hotel. Overnight.

DAY 2) BARCELONA- 16 miles

Departure after breakfast to the impressive modernist ***Palau de la Música Catalana***, erected by Domènech i Montaner in 1908.
Entering the lounge bar It is impressive. It has an impact on any viewer and decoration of glass on both side filters the rays of the sun in the 2,000-seat auditorium.



A stroll away from there you shall enter the remodelled market of ***Santa Caterina***, the oldest covered market hall in town, where you can discover the extreme variety of the local Mediterranean gastronomy products.
A short walk towards the harbour will take you to ***Santa Maria del Mar***, a most important token and paradigm of Catalan gothic stile church in town.
The simplicity of its inner decoration makes it a very graceful structure, filled in by the sun beams filtered through large stained-glass windows, quite specially its magnificent rose window.

We resume the walking tour of the ***Barri Gòtic*** or **Gothic quarter** the rough the ***Plaça del Rei*** (**King's square)** and the **Royal Palace of the Crown of Aragon**: this unique mediaeval setting is imbedded with history flash backs.

After crossing the lively **Plaça Reial (Royal Square)** we shall reach and visit the ***Palau Güell*****,** a most luxurious mansion built by Antoni Gaudí in 1888 as a residential home for his best sponsor and friend, the Count Eusebi Güell.

Then we go past the **7 centuries old Gothic Cathedral,** where the first 6 American Indians to step ever on European soil.

Next door, the Catalan Government's seat, the ***Palau de la Generalitat,*** facing the **city Council palace** from 1337 -with a renovated neoclassical façade-, stands right in the middle of the former Roman forum. Its main façade wanted to look like the *Palazzo Farnese* in Rome.

Adjacent to the palace and named the ***Call*** you enter the narrow lanes of the **medieval Jewish quarter,** walking by one of the **oldest Synagogues in Europe**, already active in Roman times.

Lunch will take place in a good restaurant in the area.

After lunch we drive to the ***Ciutadella*** **Park** in order to enjoy a visit (except in case of ordinary or plenary session) to the **Parliament of Catalonia**.

You will thereafter visit the largest and most **impressive Art nouveau hospital complex in Europe** and a real masterpiece: the unique ***Hospital de Sant Pau*** -built as well by Domènech i Montaner between 1903 and 1930. Listed **World Heritage site by the UNESCO,** designed an unprecedented" city within a city", with 48 pavilions set in gardens and interlinked by a network of underground tunnels.

Then the coach will take you to the most elegant boulevard in town, the ***Passeig de Gràcia,*** where you will be strolling past some outstanding *modernist* stile buildings designated **World Heritage Sites** such as ***Casa Amatller***, by Puig i Cadafalch, Next door you will discover ***Casa Batlló,*** a previous residential building refurbished by Gaudí in 1905-1912 and probably standing among the most unusually shaped ones worldwide. Walking some blocks further up you'll be surprised by the visual impact of ***Casa Milà***, built also by Gaudí between 1906 and 1912.
A short drive away shall take you to this small gaudinian jewell, ***Casa Vicens***, the first residential house built by master Gaudí -in the neighbourhood of Gràcia- in 1885 as a single-family summer home. Listed as **UNESCO heritage site**,

Back to the coach and you will head -last but not least- to the outer and inner visit of the undisputed architect's masterpiece, the most acclaimed **Sagrada Familia basilica,** still under construction after almost a century and a half of works.
In total capacity of 10,000 souls. Its completion is estimated to happen within a decade.
Return to the hotel. Dinner and overnight.

DAY 3) BARCELONA - SANT FRUITÓS - 62 miles

After breakfast you upload the luggage to the bus and head to the **Monastery of Sant Benet de Bages** where you visit it. Placed within the municipal boundary of Sant Fruitós de Bages, it is one of the best preserved medieval monastic sites in Catalonia.
Founded in 960 by the family of the Viscounts of Conflent, the church was consecrated in 972. At that time, it was a first pre-Romanesque style church that in the 12th century was replaced by the current Romanesque style church.

It achieved its highest profile and greatest prosperity in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, despite the attacks it occasionally received from Muslim troops.
From the XV century onwards Sant Benet declined until 1907, when it was acquired by the family of the artist Ramon Casas while the architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch was commissioned to restore it.
In 2000, the space was acquired by savings bank, which drew up a project for its careful restoration, culminating in 2007 in the opening of Món Sant Benet.

Lunch will be served in one of the restaurants in this historical complex.

In the afternoon you leave to a close by village to visit a winery. The winery has been rooted in the tradition of wine production for over eight centuries and its innovative spirit keeps it very much alive. Its wines are expressive and authentic, and evoke sensations.
They elaborate some white, rosé and red Wines of different features. Ending the visit, you will taste some different Wines.

Return to the hotel. Time at leisure, Dinner and overnight

DAY 4) SANT FRUITÓS - TAVERTET – RUPIT and PRUIT - SAN PERE DE CASSERRES - 124 miles

After breakfast you head to the **Tavertet Historical complex**, a place of cultural and historical interest.

A municipality declared an **Asset of Cultural Interest**, with an urban area that preserves houses built between the 18th and 19th centuries,
it boasts some Romanesque monuments like the church of ***Sant Cristòfol*** and the hermitage of ***Sant Corneli*.**
Tavertet had been greatly depopulated in earlier times, but recently many houses have been renovated as second homes and summer residences, while new houses have also been built.

The municipality has some major mountain crevices with the **prehistoric remains** of *Riera de Balà*, an ancient **dolmen** and an **Iberian settlement** close to the shrine of Sant Corneli, plus some **anthropomorphic tombs** excavated in the stone of L' Avenc.

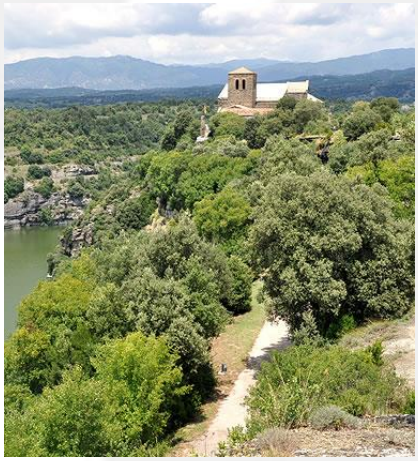
From there you head to **Rupit and Pruit**. Rupit's origin is from around the year 1000, when the **Castle of Rupit** was built, replacing the Castle of *Fàbregues.*
The hamlet of **Pruit** was mentioned in 955 and has always been linked to Rupit's Castle. It seems that the rock (in Latin "*rupes*") -where the Castle stands- is what gave the town its name. In 1978 the towns of Rupit and Pruit merged, giving the name of *Rupit and Pruit* to the municipality

Walking along its streets you can see the houses built in the 16th and 17th centuries, most of which show on their façades the building date and the name of the founding proprietors, displaying charming gates, entries, windows, wooden balconies and coats of arms. The most noteworthy are those on the street *del Fossar* and the Church Street. In number 12 on *del Palau* street there is the *notaria Soler,* a real estate lawyer's manor house from the 15th century, showing the family's coat of arms on the main door.

Apart from the Old Core and the churches, the other remarkable elements are two bridges -one of them a suspension bridge- on the Rupit torrent

Lunch will be served in one of the selected restaurants in town.

Located in the Berguedà region and still very close to Rupit, you shall visit the charming village of **Casserres** and the Church of ***Sant Pere de Casserres,*** *declared* **National Monument in 1931.** We suggest that you do walk around the old town of Casserres, basically composed of the **Main Street** and the ***La Creu*** **square,** where you can observe its beautiful stone houses from the 17th and 18th centuries. We also encourage you to visit the rural enclaves -with their Romanesque churches- of *Sant Pau de Casserres* and *Sant Miquel de Fonogedell*, as well as the textile colony with a Neogothic church of *Ametlla de Casserres*.



Return to the hotel. Time at leisure, Dinner and overnight

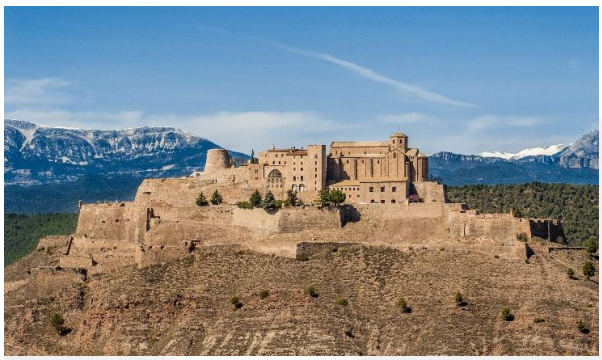
DAY 5) SANT FRUITÓS - SOLSONA - CARDONA - SALT MINES - 80 miles

After breakfast, departure heading westwards to **Solsona** which, in spite of having only 8,000 inhabitants, is proud of bearing the title of city.
An early urban settlement in Iberian and Roman times, Solsona concentrates plenty of history and character. The **Cathedral**, in the medieval part of the old city, was erected between the 12th and the 18th century. The primitive temple was Romanesque, the interior is gothic, and the baroque façade displays the elaborate gate of Saint Augustine.

The **Bishop's Palace** hosts the baroque style Diocesan Museum, which exhibits important collections of Romanesque and gothic paintings of an exceptional value, including a mural painting from the 11th century and other elements belonging to the 13th century.

Once strolling trough the old lanes it is easy to stumble onto the ***Plaça Major***, or Main Square. Every old street merges there, surrounded by noble buildings like the renaissance style **City Hall**, the ***Torre de les Hores*** -or belfry- from the early 15th c., the merchant's house in Llobera Street and the gothic **Llobera palace**, nowadays site of the *Consell Comarcal del Solsonès*, the county's ruling political power committee.
A beautiful modernist hotel, as well as some parts of the medieval walls, towers and three gates are also worth seeing.

From Solsona you leave towards **Cardona.** Located in a valley in central Catalonia, on the banks of the Cardoner River, Cardona is a picturesque town, heir to a remarkable medieval past. There, on top of a hill, we find a walled fortress: a beautiful example of Catalan Romanesque style castle.



The history of Cardona, located in the **Bages** county, begins in the Middle Ages, around the 8th century, when the **castle-fortress-palace-monastery** was built.
Walking the streets of this town takes you back to the period when Romanesque and Gothic churches were built. One of the most emblematic buildings in this town is a 9th century **fortified precinct**, which was equipped to house the town's *Parador de Turismo* (State owned Inn).

The **tower of Minyona** is one of the key features of the compound, as well as the chapel of *Sant Ramon Nonat*, which boasts Romanesque and Gothic elements. The true gem of the castle is the **Collegiate church of Sant Vicent**, an impressive 11th century Romanesque temple, with a central nave that is almost 20 metres high.
The town of Cardona also has interesting spots like the of **Carrer Major**, (Main Street) ***Plaça del Mercat*****,** and the **church of *Sant Miquel*.**

Lunch will be served at the *Parador de Turismo.*

Not to be forgotten is the visit to **Cardona's Cultural Salt Mountain Park,** in the outskirts of the city.

Forty million years ago, there was a large and vast sea situated in the centre of Catalonia. This sea was part of the Atlantic Ocean, which entered in the Iberian Peninsula from the North. This sea entrance closed gradually due to the formation of the Pre-Pyrenees, the Catalan Coastline and the Basque Mountain chains. The sea became a big lake, where water evaporated and salts precipitated to the bottom, resulting into this mine salt, which closed down in 1995 and, a year later, it converted into **Cardona's Cultural Salt Mountain Park**, that you will visit.

The galleries are 440 yards long and 260 feet deep. There you can see the three different kinds of salt.
The places to visit are the First Gallery, the Mining Gallery and Coral Room, the Ladder, Santa Barbara and columns ending the walking visit at the so called **"Sistine Chapel**".
Return to the hotel. Time at leisure. Dinner and overnight.

DAY 6) SANT FRUITÓS - CASTELLAR DE N'HUG - FONTS DEL LLOBREGAT - JARDINS ARTIGAS - 108 miles
After an early breakfast you head North towards *n' **Pobla de Lillet*** **and** ***Castellar de Hug***. This is a picturesque village in a fabulous natural setting. The village includes several examples of lovely Catalan Romanesque architecture, some well-preserved medieval cobbled streets with beautiful tokens of rural local architecture, typified by traditional stone houses.

The Middle Ages were a time of great artistic splendour and prosperity for the village, as it can be noticed in the abundant Romanesque structures throughout the region. The church of ***Santa Maria de n'Hug*****,** in the village centre, was built in the 11th century, with some later Neo-Classical additions.

Nearby there are a couple more fine Catalan Romanesque churches, including the early 12th century ***Sant Vicenç de Rus*****,** with interesting wall paintings, and ***Sant Joan de Cornudell*****,** topped by a bell-gable.

Castellar de N'Hug offers also an interesting museum to the visitor: in the spot known as ***Clot del Moro*** there is a Cement Museum, the Museum of the Asland factory in Castellar de N'Hug, a striking example of industrial Art Nouveau in what once was the first cement factory in Catalonia.

Castellar de N'Hug is a most significant village. Not only for the very town -which is well worth of its fame- but for its entourage, spots such as ***Les Fonts del Llobregat*****,** (the Llobregat river springs)

Lunch will be served in a rural restaurant with a typical mountain menu.

At the beginning of the 20th century Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi founded in the area nicknamed ***Clot del Moro*** the first Catalan cement plant. In order to feed the ovens, he used coal extracted from the *Catllaràs* mines. The considerable distance between the core of *Pobla de Lillet* and the mining exploitation convinced Eusebi Güell to commission to architect **Antoni Gaudí** the so called *Catllaràs Chalet,* used as a dwelling for employees and mining engineers.

During his stay in the Lillet Valley, A. Gaudí lodged at the Artigas family manor house. At the beginning of the 20th century, and as a token of thankfulness to the given hospitality, Gaudí designed as a present, the gardens in a plot in front of the family mansion: this is how the **Artigas Gardens** came to life, an art piece where nature and architecture unite in perfect harmony.

Return to the hotel. Time at leisure. Dinner and overnight.

<u>DAY 7) SANT FRUITÓS - MURA - TALAMANCA - MONTSERRAT - SANT SADURNÍ D'ANOIA - 80 miles</u>

After breakfast and once the luggage is loaded onto the bus you will head towards **Mura**, a village located in the **Natural Park of *Sant Llorenç del Munt* & *l'Obac***. The Park has countless corners that one should discover, such as the river pool of the *Gorg del Pare*. Within this wonderful natural scenery, you can find a beautiful village where to stroll peacefully.
Mura stands out for its perfectly well-kept houses and streets. On top of other points of interest, such as the **hermitage of *Sant Antoni* or the *Sant Martí* church.**

Then you head to **Talamanca**, which lies in one of the most amazing natural areas. Also located in **the Natural Park of *Sant Llorenç del Munt & l'Obac.***

This spectacular mediaeval village is reputed for its well-kept streets and the castle, that has a Romanesque origin. A stroll through the narrow streets is highly recommended so as to observe its ancient houses made out of stone, as well as walking through the ***Plaça de la Creu*** or Cross square.

The lunch will be served in a rural restaurant in town with a typical menu of the area.

From there we head towards **Montserrat.**

There is an unusually shaped mountain in the heart of Catalonia made from huge slabs of grey rock. At the core of this spectacular massif stands a statue of the Virgin of Montserrat, the patron saint of Catalonia. This nature reserve is covered with pine and holm oak woods and is home to squirrels, boars and genets, among others.
Halfway up the peaks there is the majestic sanctuary dedicated to '*La Moreneta*', or little brunette: a wooden 12th century Romanesque style statue of the Madonna.

The most important prehistorical vestiges -from 1200 BC- were found in two grottos: the *Cova Gran* and the *Cova Freda*. This is where some ceramic items from the Neolithic period were found for the first time in Catalonia. Legend has it that an image of St. Mary of Montserrat was found in a cave in this mountain in 880. The architectural site comprises various squares and a basilica, originally built in the 16th century and subsequently rebuilt in the 19th c., with two hostels for pilgrims and a hotel for visitors. Close by lies the Benedictine monastery with its beautiful chapter house and the neo-Romanesque cloister and refectory, refurbished in 1925 by the architect Puig i Cadafalch. Its museum is also home to works by artists such as Picasso, Salvador Dalí, El Greco or Caravaggio.

Also open to public access are the New Audio-visual Space and the Open-Air Museum, where –thanks to an audioguide– visitors can see the Modernist sculptures and the *Santa Cova* (a chapel attached to the rock in which the image of the Virgin Mary was said to have been found).

The veneration of this Virgin Mary did spread all over South America when the monk Bernat Boil accompanied Christopher Columbus to the New World.

It is said that an image of the Virgin of Montserrat appeared in a cave in the mountain. The monastery was founded by **Abbott Oliba in 1025,** although there is evidence that there was a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary in this site as early as in 888. The Romanesque church was built in the 12th century and in 1223 the first European School for boy singers and quire was founded here. The Virgin of Montserrat was declared the patron saint of Catalonia by Pope Leo XIII. In the year 1500, Saint Ignatius of Loyola travelled here on a pilgrimage, and thus getting the inspiration to start his *Society of Jesus*.

From there you leave to Penedès county. Accommodation at the hotel, dinner and overnight.

Day 8) SANT SADURNÍ D'ANOIA- AIR BALLOON FLIGHT AND VISIT A CAVA CELLER - 45 miles

We think this experience can please everyone. An activity that, in the heart of Nature, combines the thrill, the serenity, relaxation and landscape.

Early breakfast and departure from the hotel to the Meeting Point where you will receive your welcome backpack and will participate in the balloon preparation, helping to assemble and inflate the balloons. The activity begins bright and early in the morning (between 07:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., according to the season). We shall fly for an hour and a quarter approximately, with smooth changes of height controlled by the pilot, letting yourselves be carried by the breezes that will mark the balloon's route.

A flight in a hot air balloon is a different way of travelling, floating in the air, in sheer peacefulness and quietness. Enjoy the feeling of absolute freedom, perfect stillness and adventure. Ideal for nature lovers and for those who are searching for new sensations. A hot air balloon flight gives you a 360º bird's eye view of the landscape.

The 4WD will come to pick you up at the landing field and will take us back to the starting place where you will toast with cava and you will be given your flight certificate and the photographs.

From there you shall head towards one of the world's most reputed **wineries** -located in the Penedès county- an area considered the most relevant white wine production region of all Spain. The cellars are the epitome -proven by their history- of a long-lasting wine growers family business: dating back to the 16**th** century, it happens to be the oldest **family owned company** in Spain, while being as well considered one of the oldest wine producing businesses worldwide, accounting with more than 450 years of history and the lifespan of 18 generations. Nowadays they have vineyards in the most important wine production in Spain.
The same way they currently use the most modern technology in order to pinpoint the optimal moment for the grapes ripeness.

At present they possess vineyards and wineries in the most renowned wine producing areas in Spain.

You shall visit a good part of the cellars, ending with a tasting of some of their Premium products, together with an abundant aperitif especially prepared just for your group.

Return to the hotel, time to relax and freshen up. Dinner and overnight.

DAY 9) VISIT GAUDI'S CRIPTA - BARCELONA -40 miles

After breakfast and loading the luggage in the bus you will head towards the **Colonia Güell**, a trip to the 19th century.

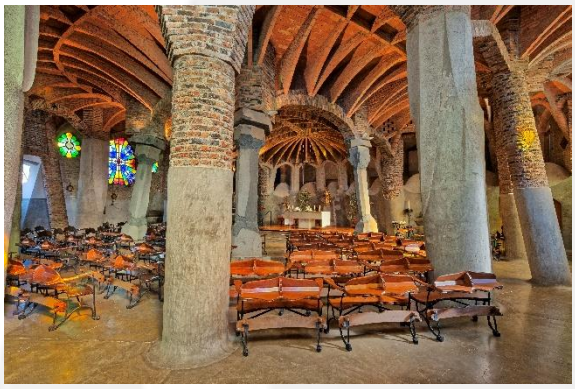
The path through the industrial Colonia Güell captivates all visitors due to its charm and the peacefulness that this vestige of the *Modernista* era inspires through the rather perceptible 19th century atmosphere, kept still alive between its streets and buildings. Currently, the Colonia Güell remains an important piece of historical and artistic heritage.

The industrial colonies were promoted as social and economic organisations which main goal was the industrial production. The factory was where the men and women of the colony spent most of their time, but for them it meant the safety of a regular income in times of a precarious economic situation, besides the colony has houses for the workers and their families, a school, a hospital and a church.

The construction of the *Colonia Güell* was started in 1890 as an initiative by the entrepreneur Eusebi Güell in his property *Can Soler de la Torre*, located in the municipal boundaries of *Santa Coloma de Cervelló.*

The main importance of the unfinished church in the Colonia Güell, inn so far as Antoni Gaudi goes, is that this is where he brought together for the first time all of his architectural innovations. As Gaudí said, had the church been finished, it would have been a "monumental model of the Sagrada Familia".

In 1908 the construction of the Temple was begun. Nevertheless, the ambitious project that foresaw a double nave church -an upper and lower nave- crowned by several side towers and a 40 meters high central dome, would end up unfinished. In 1914 Eusebi Güell's sons let Gaudí know that they would no longer keep financing the works in progress and he had to abandon the project. Only the lower nave was finished and received the popular name of **Cript**.
In 1990 the Colonia Güell complex was nominated an **Asset of Cultural and Historical Interest**, being then established the most relevant buildings' protection as well as the constructions' general attributes.



The **Crypt** was nominated **World Heritage Site by the UNESCO** in July 2005 and in 2013 it became the first monument with this recognition being awarded the Biosphere Certificate for the sustainable management of its services, an award that has been renovated for having coped with the 17 Goals of Sustainable Development marked by the United Nations. In 2018, in occasion of the European Cultural Heritage Year, it was awarded the Best Destination for Sustainable Cultural Tourism by the European Network of Cultural Touris

Immediately thereafter you will head to Barcelona and be accommodated in the hotel. Time at leisure in order to let you enjoy this beautiful city.

Farewell dinner will be served in a select restaurant of the city. Return to the hotel and overnight.

DAY 10) BARCELONA AIRPORT - DEPARTURE - 16 miles

Breakfast. Time at leisure or transfer to the airport where you do the checking in at your air carrier counter, then go through the security and passport control and at the gate, you board the plane to your next destination.

END OF OUR SERVICES

BON VOYAGE

Disclaimer:

This program - itinerary has been designed for your own enjoyment, but we hold the right to modify it for reasons of *force majeure*, other unforeseeable circumstances or in order to improve the itinerary. Some activities are subject to the weather conditions, while the visits to monuments are subject to the valid opening times during the tour.

We highly recommend to program this trip from May to October except July and August, for not being this two months the most adequate for this journey.