

50 BEST EXPERIENCES
BY THE SEA

WORDS | ANNIE BENNETT

The Pyrenees slip into the Mediterranean in the north of Catalonia, marking the start of a coastline that stretches for 360 miles. You could spend a lifetime travelling the Catalan coast and discover something new every day. Start at the headland in the Cap de Creus National Park, where the wonderful light is a magnet for artists. Then walk or cycle along the Costa Brava,

sampling some freshly-caught prawns and local wine along the way. Take in the art nouveau architecture on the Costa del Maresme before hitting Barcelona with its urban beach scene. Further south, stop off at one of the beaches in stylish Sitges before exploring Tarragona, where a Roman amphitheatre overlooks the sea. When you get to the southern end of the coast, take a boat trip around the Ebro Delta, then eat oysters with a glass of cava. catalunya.com

2 | 9 **Compartir restaurant, Cadaqués**

5 | 0 N41° 33.7444', E002° 0.6712'



The El Bulli restaurant may have closed last year, but the team are busier than ever with new projects. As well as working on the development of the El Bulli Foundation, three of the head chefs - Oriol Castro, Eduard Xatruch and Mateu Casañas - have opened their own informal restaurant in Cadaqués on the Costa Brava, one of the prettiest villages in Spain. 'Compartir' means 'to share', and there are around 40 dishes on the menu to encourage diners to do just that. Ingredients are sourced locally as far as possible and are used to create Catalan cuisine that is both traditional and contemporary. Grab a table on the terrace, kick off with the prawn and asparagus tempura, and you'll get the idea. It's all about simplicity here. compartircadaques.com

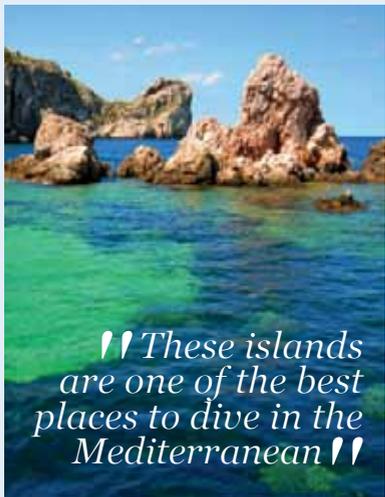
Catalonia
Essential Spain:



Scorpion fish, lobsters and giant groupers are just a few of the myriad species swimming around the corals, caves and tunnels in the turquoise waters of this uninhabited archipelago. Situated just off L'Estartit in the Baix Empordà area of the Costa Brava, the seven tiny, islands are exceptionally rich in marine life, making this one of the best places in the Mediterranean for diving, whether near the surface or at depths of more than 20 metres. Above sea level, the islands also provide an idyllic habit for peregrine falcons, swifts, herons, egrets and yellow-legged gulls. visitestartit.com

3 | 0 **Diving around the Medes Islands**

5 | 0 Costa Brava
N42° 4.3348', E002° 31.4316'



!! These islands are one of the best places to dive in the Mediterranean !!

3 | 1 **Cycling along the Costa Brava**

5 | 0 Costa Brava
N42° 4.3348', E002° 31.4316'

A bike allows you to discover the secluded coves of this rugged coastline at your own pace, riding along old smugglers' paths and stopping off to plunge into the sea. Along the way, you cycle through a mesmerising landscape of vineyards, rice fields and olive groves, getting a privileged insight into the culture and character of Catalonia. As dusk falls, you arrive at medieval hamlets of honey-coloured stone, to spend the night in medieval mansions that are now stylish rustic hotels. Although professional cyclists often choose to train in this stunning region, plenty of the tracks in the extensive network on the Costa Brava are suitable for gentle trundling too. costabrava.org



3 | 2 **Hotel Tancat de Codorniu**

5 | 0 Alcanar
N40° 32.5212', E000° 28.8885'



All you see is orange and palm trees from this traditional mansion, which dates back to the mid-19th Century. By the beach in Alcanar, near the Ebro Delta at the southern end of Catalonia, the house is now an elegant hotel with 11 light-filled rooms and suites, all charmingly unique, some with beamed ceilings and large terraces. Sink into the Mediterranean way of life by lying next to one of the pools and breathing in the delicate aroma of oranges, then taste the regional cuisine in the restaurant, which makes the most of the fish from Alcanar and locally grown fruit and vegetables. tancatdecodorniu.com

3 | 3 **Architectural tour of 22@Barcelona**

5 | 0 Barcelona
N41° 22.1109', E002° 11.3667'

Barcelona's Poblenou district, which sprawls along the waterfront in the north of the city behind a string of beaches, developed in the 19th Century with the textile industry and was once known as the 'Catalan Manchester'. Many of the mills and factories now house creative businesses, and the 22@Barcelona regeneration project has become an area of loft apartments, restaurants and clubs. Take a tram ride along the Avinguda Diagonal, from which you can see the Forum of Cultures as well as a host of modern architecture. 22barcelona.com





3 | 4 **Hotel W Barcelona**

5 | 0 Barcelona
 N41° 22.1109', E002° 11.3667'

With its distinctive design like the sail of a ship, the W effortlessly became one of Barcelona's signature buildings the minute it opened. Right by the beach alongside the characterful Barceloneta neighbourhood, you get a jaw-dropping view from just about anywhere in the hotel - and that includes the gym and the pool. Feast on the modern Catalan food created by top chef Carles Abellán at Bravo, then zoom up to the 26th floor for cocktails at Eclipse, one of the hottest clubs in town. If you are in Barcelona with a group of friends, book the private Extreme WOW Cabana for the day for the ultimate decadent experience. w-barcelona.com

3 | 5 **Cambrils**

5 | 0 Costa Daurada
 N41° 10.4718', E001° 29.1624'

In-the-know foodies have been coming to this low-key, stylish resort near Tarragona on the Costa Daurada for years, but it is now getting a firm foothold on the gourmet map as one of the places featured in the

Tasting Spain campaign, which promotes local produce, cuisine and wines. There are half a dozen outstanding restaurants - and more than a hundred good ones. As well as the fish landed in the harbour every afternoon, restaurants make good use of the excellent Siurana olive oil, produced in the nearby countryside. If you want to try authentic Mediterranean cuisine, this is a great place to start - and there are miles of golden beaches too. tastingspain.es

