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## Affordable Europe: Barcelona

By SARAH WILDMAN

Barcelona is the ultimate walking city. So much can be seen from the street — from Gaudí's modernist treasures to the wild social scene along the open boulevards — flâneurs can momentarily forget that this is the most expensive city in [Spain](#). Still, there are a number veritable steals to be had in this Mediterranean city.

### Where to Stay

Travelers have long believed there are only two options for sleeping in Barcelona: backpacker hostels or luxury high rises, and never the twain shall meet. Challenging that premise, the Chic and Basic company ([www.chicandbasic.com](http://www.chicandbasic.com).) gives travelers three low-cost options: hotel, hostel and rental apartments sprinkled across downtown from Born (carrer Princesa, 50; 34-93-295-4652) to Plaza Catalunya (Calle Tallers, 82; 34-93-302-5183) to Gotico (Calle Estruch, 20; 34-93-200-2588.). Hostel rates start at 75 euros for a double; 55 euros for a single (about \$102 and \$75 at \$1.36 to the euro); the hotel goes up a notch to between 110 and 210 euros per night. All rooms are very bright, very white — with an eye to sound design (iPod docks and television [music](#) channels) and basic needs, which in the jargon of Euro-travelers means bottles of water, plasma televisions and Internet access. In the hotel and hostel, there are small shared kitchenettes. Just down the street from Chic and Basic Born, [Ciutat Barcelona](#) (Carrer Princesa, 35; 34-93-269-7475; [www.ciutathotels.com](http://www.ciutathotels.com)), has minimalist rooms with tall French windows that begin at 95 euros with free high-speed Internet connections and plasma TVs. A roof deck has an itty-bitty pool. A few new apartment rental companies provide Ikea-basic apartments for two to four people in high-end locations. At the newcomer Decimononico (Calle Pescatería, 1; 34-93-319-1661; [www.decimononico.com](http://www.decimononico.com)) apartment rentals in Born begin at 65 euros a person for a double.

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### Where to Eat

Away from the crowds in the popular L'Eixample area you'll find cutting-edge and affordable [Me](#). (Carrer de Paris, 162; 34-93 4194-933; [www.catarsiscuisine.com](http://www.catarsiscuisine.com)) a seven-month-old hybrid of [New Orleans](#), Vietnamese and Catalan cooking created by Thang Pham. A four-course lunch menu is 14 euros. At Mosquito (Carders, 46; 34-93-268-7569), tucked away on a Born side street, tapas for 2 to euros apiece are made with an Indian or Asian twist. The [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) (Macba) flipped the neighborhood around Carrer Doctor Dou and brought in some cool new restaurants. Carmelitas (Carrer Doctor Dou, 1; 34-93-412-4684) is a lofty space with basement prices for traditional Catalan tapas. On the Barceloneta waterfront, hole-in-the wall Bar Venta Manchego draws a daytime crowd seeking big plates of fried sardines (6.50 euros) and other seafood specialties.

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### Where to Shop

If you happen to hit the city during the July sales, you can find designer clothing at 80 percent off retail prices. Last July at high-end Como Agua de Mayo (Carrer Argentería, 43; 34-93-310-6441), which sells hot

new Spanish, Basque and Catalan designers (like Miriam Ocariz), a red leather clutch was marked down 85 percent. For those looking for unusual women's wear, newcomer Garden (Carrer Escudellers, 56; [www.akepica.com](http://www.akepica.com)) sells one-of-kind designer jackets and A-line skirts, for a mere 30 euros apiece. Along Carrer Avinyo, small shops display everything from schlock to designer at wallet-friendly prices.

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#### Best Money-Saving Tip

Unlimited travel cards for two to five consecutive days (9.60 to 20.80 euros) can be purchased online ([www.tmb.net](http://www.tmb.net)) good for Barcelona's extensive bus, tram and subway network. But before you whip out the credit card, consider the T10 travel card, which buys 10 trips on buses or the metro for only 6.90 euros. Add to that the 20-euro Articket ([www.telentrada.com](http://www.telentrada.com) and for sale in participating galleries), which buys entry into practically every major art museum and gallery in town.

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