

Tour
Information



Christmas in Catalonia





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to France and Spain.

Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Spanish consulate: 20 Draycott Pl, Chelsea, London SW3 2RZ; Tel (020) 7589 8989. Information Service: Tel (0891) 887 733, Fax: (020) 7581 7888. Opening hours: 0930-1300 Mon-Fri (except British and Spanish national holidays).



Tickets

You will be issued with a return train ticket.

Please take care not to lose your tickets and please check that the details on your tickets are accurate. Your ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.

Standard Premier on Eurostar tickets is indicated by two asterisks in the class type section in the top right-hand corner. A light meal will be served to passengers travelling Standard Premier on Eurostar. Standard class Eurostar tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although there is a buffet car serving drinks and snacks.

TGV tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although a buffet car is available.

Train Seats

On all legs of the journey you have reserved seat and carriage numbers which are shown clearly on your ticket.



Baggage

As with most trains, passengers are responsible for carrying baggage onto and off the train. Baggage can be stored on overhead shelves or at the entrance to the carriages. Trolleys are available at St Pancras and Lille, but bags do need to be carried on to the platform. Porters are sometimes but not always available at St Pancras.

Travel Editions recommends a luggage delivery service called **thebaggageman**, where your suitcase can be picked up from your home before departure and delivered straight to your hotel; therefore removing the worry about carrying your cases onto and off the trains.

For further information:

<http://www.thebaggageman.com>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Transfers

On arrival in Perpignan, transfer by coach to the four-star Hotel Pirineos, Figueres (approx. 1 hour).

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Hotel Pirineos, Figueres

The recently-renovated four-star Hotel Pirineos is located in the centre of Figueres, close to the Dali Theatre Museum and the city's shopping area. The hotel has a restaurant 'Pelegri' which serves a variety of dishes. Rooms all have private bathroom with bath/shower, TV, phone, hairdryer, air-conditioning/heating, safe, wi-fi and mini-bar.

For more information please visit the hotel's website:

<https://www.hotelpirineospelegri.com/en>



Food

Catalonia is known for its proud artisan food production, as well as its interesting and modern interpretations of traditional dishes. Meals in the Catalan Pyrenees often include fresh vegetables, legumes, pasta, pork sausages, lamb, chicken, fish, and game. Another favourite ingredient of the entire Province of Catalonia, and especially the forests of Lleida, are the wide range of wild mushrooms. The most popular types of mushrooms found here are: boletus, wild mushrooms, meadow mushrooms, chanterelles, elms and gomphidus.

Local specialities include: Escudella, Putxero or Ollada - A thick soup, often made with vegetables, chickpeas, pasta and meat, Confitat de porc -Pork preserve, Trinxat - A traditional dish made from cabbage, potatoes and bacon, Coca or Coques - Savoury pastries with a pizza-like base, Cargols amb salsa, or Cargols a la llauna - Snails cooked in a sauce and spices, Esqueixada or "esgarrat" - Salted cod salad mixed with tomato and onion, Mongetes amb botifarra - Beans served with pork sausage, Pa amb tomàquet - Bread smeared with an olive oil, garlic and tomato sauce.

The region's most famous sweet is the *Crème Catalane* (egg yolk, milk and sugar custard), enjoyed plain, with a thin layer of caramelised sugar and sometimes served with biscuits.

Coffee is served after the meal and will be black, in small cups, unless a *café au lait* (or *crème*) is requested. Often served with coffee are *Carquinyolis* (crunchy almond biscuits) or *Catanies* (almonds covered in white and dark chocolate).

Some restaurants will offer a set meal at a fixed – *menú del día* – at lunchtime, generally good value for money. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, but it is customary to leave small change if good service is provided.

Generally speaking, mealtimes in Spain are much later than in the UK. Lunch is normally taken between 1400 and 1600; dinner is very often eaten any time after 2100 or even 2200.



Drink

With its generous year-round sunshine and excellent mountain soils, Midi-Pyrénées is blessed with some truly magnificent wines. The region boasts 5 AOC (Appellation d'origine contrôlée) wines, with the most well-known producers being Saint-Mont, Pacherenc, Madiran, Gaillac, Fronton and Cahors wines.

Midi-Pyrénées is also famous for its Armagnac brandies, which are distilled in the region between Auch and Condom.

Catalan sparkling wine, *Cava*, is produced rosé and white, and comes, as *champagne*, from the dry *brut* to the sweet *dulce*.

In elegant restaurants the wine list will be separate from the main menu, but in less opulent establishments will be printed on the back or along the side of the *carte*. The waiter will usually be glad to advise an appropriate choice. If in doubt, try the house wine; this will usually be less expensive and will always be the owner's pride.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Dinner – first evening, Christmas Eve festive dinner (hotel), Christmas Day (local restaurant)



Destination

The historic principality of Catalonia sits on the north east of the Iberian Peninsula, reaching over the Pyrenees and along the Mediterranean coast into the old county of Roussillon in France. With hills peppered with the ruins of Cathar castles, a rugged coastline and lush plains dotted with charming old towns, this beautiful region offers an air of the romantic and, reputedly, the sunniest weather in France. Today, the Catalan territories are still immensely proud of their heritage, its influence still palpable through landscape, culture, literature and art.

Places of interest included in the tour:

Figueres

Fourteen kilometres inland from Catalonia's glistening Golf de Roses lies Figueres. Birthplace of Surrealist Salvador Dalí, Figueres is an attractive town with a wide, leafy boulevard lined with outdoor cafés as its main thoroughfare. The principal attraction is Dalí's striking homage to Surrealism, the *Teatre-Museu Gala* (entrance included), which is suitably bizarre and houses an impressive collection of his work. Beyond its star attraction, busy Figueres is a lively place with a couple of interesting museums, some good restaurants, pleasant shopping streets around Carrer de Peralada, and a grand 18th-century fortress.

For more information about Figueres, visit:
<http://en.visitfigueres.cat/>

Salses

The commune of Salses, renowned for its late 15th century border fort built by the Spanish, overlooks the vast vineyards of the Corbières region famed for their excellent red wines. In one of France's most unspoilt regions, heading into the foothills of the Pyrenees, we'll come across a series of craggy castles draped along the backbones of the mountains. Built in the 13th century, the Cathars sought refuge in these castles from the vicious crusade against them, led by Simon de Montfort.

For more information about Salses:
<http://www.salses-le-chateau.fr/index.php>

Collioure

A picturesque seaside town in the foothills of the Pyrenees, backed by a series of ancient terraced vines, the colourful harbour town of Collioure is delightful. In the early 20th century the town became the meeting place of Fauve artists, including Matisse, Derain and Picasso, and their artistic influence survives. Highlights here include the *Château Royal*, built by the Knights Templar in the 13th century, the 17th century *Église de Notre-Dame-des-Anges* and its famous *bell tower*, and the delightful narrow alley ways and colourful houses.

For more information about Collioure:
<http://www.collioure.com/en/>

Girona & Besalú

Elegant and handsome Girona is a lively city with a walled medieval quarter, which sits on a hill overlooking the city, elegant river banks lined with brightly painted houses and plenty of excellent museums. Sights here include the *Archaeological Walk* that explores the city's Roman roots, the distinctively-named *Church of St Peter of the cock Crows*, the wonderfully preserved medieval Jewish quarter of *El Call*, the imposing *Cathedral* and 12th century *Arab Baths*.

An important town in the Middle Ages, Besalú is filled with gorgeous stone houses and arcaded cobbled streets. Its most impressive feature is the magnificent 12th century *Romanesque bridge* crossing the Fluvià river. Other sights include two fine *Romanesque churches* and a ritual *Jewish bath* (a mikvah) dating back to 1264, one of only 3 in Europe.

For more information about Girona:
<http://www.girona.cat/turisme/eng/index.php>

Perpignan

A thoroughly Southern city, Perpignan is the multicultural capital of the French Catalan region. The city's small old town is a little rough-around-the-edges, but the vibrantly painted facades and palm tree lined boulevards make it feel wonderfully Mediterranean. Sights here include an *Arab quarter*, the 13th century *Palais des Rois de Majorque*, the *Loge de Mer* Maritime Exchange, the 14th century *Hotel de Ville*, the Gothic *Cathédrale St Jean*

Baptiste, and the *Musée Catalan* of North Catalan history.

For more information about Perpignan:
<http://www.perpignantourisme.com/gb>

Céret & Rosas

The cherry town of Céret is a true taste of southwest France, though with its tiled and painted facades, the town has a very Spanish feel. Popular with the likes of Picasso and Matisse, it has an artistic heritage reflected in its Museum of Modern Art (entrance included) that houses an outstanding collection. Rosas is a pretty coastal resort situated at the northern end of the Gulf of Roses on the Costa Brava, and is an important fishing port with beautiful long white beaches. It is loved for its unique location as it is the only beach resort facing west, which means tourists and locals alike get to enjoy beautiful sunsets across the Gulf of Roses.

For more information about Ceret:
<http://www.vallespir-tourisme.fr/>

Christmas

It is traditional in Spain for families to have their main Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve. Most shops will be closed on Christmas Day although there will be a limited selection of bars and restaurants open. Your tour manager will have details of opening times and Christmas services.

Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

Reading suggestions

Charles Richard Weld, *The Pyrenees: West and East, 1859.*

The historian Charles Richard Weld wrote a series of “Vacation Tours”, of which the account of his travels to the Pyrenees.

Michael Eaude, *Catalonia: A Cultural History*

A vivid introduction to the fascinating history of this region, lodged between France and Spain.

John Payne, *Catalonia: History and Culture*

Payne provides an engaging, lively history of this border area, highly informative and enjoyable to read.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in Catalonia and along the Costa Brava at this time of year is likely to be cool with the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.

Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – Spanish and Catalan.

Religion – Roman Catholic.

National holidays – New Year's day (01 Jan); Epiphany (06 Jan); Good Friday; Easter Monday; Labour day (01 May); Victory in Europe day (08 May); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); Spanish National holiday (12 Oct); All Saints' day (01 Nov); Armistice day (11 Nov); Spanish Constitution Day (06 Dec); Immaculate Conception (08 Dec); Christmas day (25 Dec); St Stephens Day (26 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

Shops and museums – Department stores are open 0900-1830 Monday to Saturday. Most shops are closed between 1200-1430. Some food shops (particularly bakers) are open Sunday mornings, in which case they will probably close Monday. Many shops close all day or half-day Monday. Please note that some museums close on Mondays.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate General Madrid

Torre Espacio

Paseo de la Castellana 259D

28046 Madrid

Spain

Spain.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Fax: +34 917 146 403

Telephone enquiries: 902 109 356 (in Spain), +34 917 146 300 (if outside Spain).

Consular phone lines are open 0900-1700.

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