



## **Barcelona to the Costa Brava Trip Notes** **August 30 to September 12, 2017**

### **Headlines:**

- My 20<sup>th</sup> but last trip with Country Walkers due to their new policy excluding any non-hikers from the dining table.
- Our 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Barcelona, with first in March 2014 after Majorca Marathon, and the other with Marie in December 2014.
- All three trips used the same glorious apartment.
- Last day didn't go well – we lost Tom's carry-on bag with new iPhone 7, new Bose noise cancellation headphones, prescription sunglasses, camera, loads of cash, power cords, etc.
- Costa Brava Coast is known as Salvador Dali's home town.
- Stronger hiking than usual with Country Walkers.
- Participants were almost too smart to tolerate; we lost a lot of the real tour guide's information as a result of far too many questions. Some mundane, many smart but off the subject.
- Here is the map of our journey within Catalonia.
- Far, far too much food! One just can't lunch from 2-5pm then start with dinner again at 8pm. But we tried.



### **Daily notes:**

#### ***Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday***

We are in Barcelona and obviously we like it since this is our third trip. The first time was in conjunction with a Majorca marathon (which I started but didn't finish having just accomplishing over 100 so why do anymore) and the next time was about 10 days with Marie in 2014.

The trip over was easy enough but I didn't sleep and thus I broke my rule and had a long nap upon arrival. Was that lack of discipline or simply having gotten older?

I'll include a picture of our lovely suite on Las Ramblas on the top floor of Le Meridien. You can bet that Tom knew exactly where he wanted to go for dinner. Friend and fellow hiker Sonya joined us for an evening of tapas which included plenty of wine but didn't preclude us from helping her with her bottle of wine / champagne at her hotel.

The next day gave us a huge buffet breakfast and a tour around town to re-new sites. And of course another tapas dinner.

Since neither of us have been getting our trip report jobs done, and since I'm now in the third day of our trip and well behind, I'll give up doing captions.



Our small suite in Le Meridien on Las Ramblas, and the view from the window.



On our first visit to Barcelona, we ate at La Flauta at least three times! Then again with Marie. And now with Sonya. Las Ramblas was still full of security and flowers for the terrorist action a couple weeks earlier. On the seaside was the famous yacht called "Nirvana" of record value.



The building with about 5,000 windows is known as The Pickle, or another P word that's worst. It was purchased by Hyatt in 2014. Always one must walk around Sagrada Familia as we would do again on our return to Barcelona. It might be completed by 2024 or 2028.



On the Paseo de Gracia, or their Rodeo Drive or Champs, one sees Gaudi design everywhere.



The Catalunya Square is the center of Barcelona tourist activity. I'm enjoying a wine and/or a Aperol Spritz or both with Salvador Dali in our hotel bar. The staid restaurant had the "F your diet" sign.



### ***Saturday and Sunday -- Day 1 and 2 of the hike in Catalonia***

Overview from your company - Enjoy the spectacular mountain views, charming seaside villages, unique culture, and ancient history of Catalonia—a region often considered its own country within the boundaries of Spain. Here, in the company of exceptional local guides, you can explore the dormant cinder cones of ancient volcanoes, now lushly carpeted with oak trees. Stroll the gothic streets of Girona, discovering its rich history and massive Romanesque cathedral. In landscapes of wildflower dotted fields, stone hilltop towns, and seaside cliffs, delight in walks that reveal the region's hidden charms. Savor the local terroir during a private wine tasting at a family-run vineyard and the exceptional flavors of Catalan cuisine during meals at highly regarded restaurants. Through it all, you stay in gracious, authentic accommodations that keep you close to all the highlights while still offering a luxurious oasis of calm.

From the itinerary: Saturday - Montserrat; 5 - 9 miles, easy to moderate; transfer to Garrotxa Volcanic Natural Park - After a brief welcome gathering at your hotel, bid farewell to Barcelona as you head inland to nearby Montserrat, an imposing mountain in the pre-coastal Catalan range. Famous for its almost organic-seeming rock formations and Benedictine abbey, this mountain is often considered the "heart" of Catalonia by locals (the Caribbean island of the same name was christened by homesick Catalan sailors). Upon arrival, a 10-minute ride on the Sant Joan funicular brings you near the summit, where spectacular views await. To the east, you can see Barcelona and the Mediterranean on clear days, to the north the distant saw teeth of the Pyrenees, and below you on the mountainside, the Santa Maria de Montserrat monastery. In this setting, enjoy a 1½-hour walk along a well-maintained (though occasionally rocky) path up to the topmost peak, Sant Jeroni. From here, you may either continue down to the monastery on foot (a relatively steep trail with a significant number of steps) or, for an easier option, via the funicular. End

(Some of us chose to take a series of steps and really rocky trail up to the top about 1200 feet elevation more for a rather dramatic 360° panorama.)

Upon arrival at the monastery, we were to be treated to a performance by its acclaimed boys' choir, which sings daily at 1:00 p.m. (Note that this was my second trip to the monastery and both times the boys' choir were away. I called them the ghosts though we did see a video of them in the museum when we were here with Marie.) Santa Maria de Montserrat is also famous for its "Black Madonna"—a statue of a dark-skinned Virgin Mary that some believe was carved in Jerusalem during the early days of the church (though most art historians date it later). Today, Mare de Déu de Montserrat is the patron saint of Catalonia.

From the itinerary: After visiting the monastery, you enjoy a feast of traditional Catalan cuisine at a nearby monastery restaurant with sweeping views of the valley below. Starters may include pa amb tomaquet (crusty country bread with tomato and garlic), jamón ibérico (Spanish cured ham), cod balls, chorizitos (small chorizo sausages), and calamari. Main courses may include lamb cutlets, entrecote or cod in honey, roasted chicken with rosemary, or fideos (a paella-style seafood dish made with noodles). Satisfied from lunch, you relax on a 1½-hour minibus transfer to Garrotxa Volcanic Natural Park—an inland region of rolling hills, gorges, and lush forest in the foothills of the Pyrenees and your home for the next two nights. After checking in at your accommodations, gather with fellow guests on the patio for an aperitif and asado barbecue. End

Little did we expect that the reasonably short ride from Barcelona would result in Tom having nearly 8 hours from Hotel departure to arrival at the evening's hotel. Of course I was worried and he was quite exhausted. It didn't keep him from enjoying the barbecue dinner.

Hotel El Ventós – 1st of 2 nights – A recently renovated traditional and stone farmhouse on a mountaintop, El Ventós enjoys panoramic views which, on a clear day, extend all the way to the sea. Spacious guest rooms blend modern and rustic, with terracotta tile floors, white walls, large windows, and antiques. In addition to the main fireside lounge—with exposed beams and cozy seating looking out onto a large terrace—there are hammocks, a "cyber corner", a reading room, and an outdoor swimming pool set on almost 1,000 acres of grounds with gardens and trails. The excellent on-site restaurant features the property's own or very local products. Yes it was just as remote as it sounds with about a 4 mile single lane road to get into it. And a road that is very difficult to find as Tom found out.

We would later see this remote hotel featured on USA Today's list of 52 places to go.

### ***Sunday - Day 2 of hike***

From the itinerary: El Ventós circuit: 5.5 or 8.5 miles, easy to moderate, 985-ft. elevation gain and 1310-ft. loss. Today's walk provides an ideal introduction to the region surrounding your hotel. Created in 1985, Garrotxa Volcanic Natural Park is—as its name implies—home to 30 dormant conical volcanoes that last erupted only 11,000 years ago. This unique geology (there is no other region like it in Europe) has resulted in rich soils of ochre and black lava, which contrast beautifully with the region's beech forests and verdant meadows. The park hosts over a thousand plant species, as well as animals ranging from wild boar to foxes, rabbits, weasels, and hedgehogs.

In this beautiful setting, you trace a path entirely within the hotel's estate, which leads up through the forest to a lookout that provides stunning views of the entire region, including upcoming highlights from your itinerary—tomorrow's walk in the next valley and the distant Cape of Creus jutting into the Mediterranean just below the French border.

Later we discover the beautiful 13th-century place major (or Main Square) of Santa Pau. It was a little bit like France's St Paul de Venice but instead of an A maybe it was a C class. The church included a large nativity scene which is common in Catalan and we've seen them around Naples Italy.

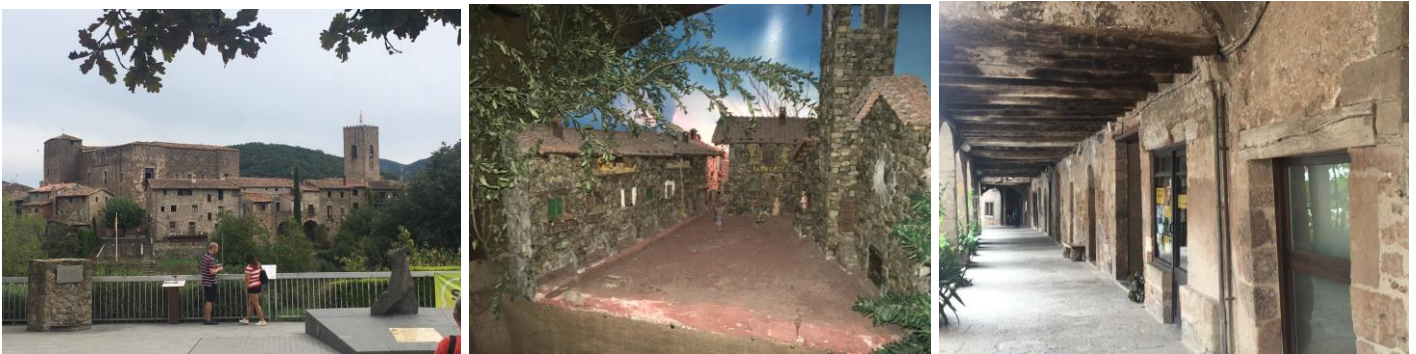
In a scenic field, you sit down for a picnic lunch from your hotel's kitchen. Later - Take time to relax before savoring a delicious, seasonal dinner in the hotel's elegant restaurant. End

***Pictures include:***

- The Monserrat complex up high on a hill is also a stop-over for the Camino De Santiago which I have signed up for next May. Sure enough, I missed the boy's choir once again so I guess I'll have to return.
- The chapel with the black Madonna is world renowned. We saw her in 2014 at Marie's insistence.
- We were not the rock climbers but we did get to the top and had a 360° view. There were hundreds of stair steps to get there.
- I liked our shadow pictures better than the picture of the bunch of old folks.
- Lunch in the monasteries hotel included at least 12 different tapas.
- At dinner, one of our tour guides brought his band and sang and it was tunes from the 40s that Tom remembers performing and knew all the words. I didn't take a dinner picture because though it was very tasty it was just barbecued meats.
- Can you imagine walking down into the middle of an 11,000-year-old volcano and finding a 1000-year-old church? Along with the zillion school kids. It was our picnic spot.
- Then to an old hilltop village that might have reminded you of Saint Paul de Vince but it was probably a C class instead of an A class hilltop village. Interesting and quaint all the same. Can you tell which picture is the mini nativity scene and Re-creation of the village and which is the real thing? It is all the Disneyesque.
- We had walked through the lava fields where they plant a type of fava beans which necessitated shopping in the village for these noted lava beans.

Under separate cover I'll include pictures of the remote hotel's multi-course tasting dinner. And at that it is now good night.





**Saturday and Sunday Hotel and Dinner**

We had two nights in a lovely suite in this remote location.

Tom has not been particularly impressed with the food of Catalan but it certainly has been different and interesting and I remind myself that this is why we travel. To see and taste new things. Remote! First, our terrace and the view.



### **Monday - Day 3 of tour**

A two hour ride takes us to our next destination; here is the plan from the itinerary (only those with me will see that pieces of days got shuffled). San Miguel to Santa Pau: 5-6 miles, easy to moderate, 950-ft. elevation gain and 1,310-ft. elevation loss; Transfer to Girona.

Today's activities begin with a 20-minute transfer to the trailhead, from where you begin a walk that skirts below high volcanic cliffs and traverses fields dotted with small stone farmhouses (or mas). Soon, the landscape gives way to the thick beech forest of Jordá. After about an hour of walking, you emerge near a small café, where you may pause for a morning coffee before an optional detour to the Santa Margarida Volcano. Here, you'll find a unique Romanesque hermitage in the grassy crater at its center.

Pressing on, the path continues through lush vegetation to arrive in Santa Pau, a small medieval village with a beautiful 13th-century placa major (or main square) surrounded by arcaded stone buildings. Here, you'll enjoy a well-deserved lunch of local specialties, perhaps including the town's protected heirloom crop: fesols, an indigenous bean cultivated in the volcanic soil. While in town, you'll have a chance to admire some of its buildings "of Cultural Interest," including a Romanesque church, a castle, and many others (over 80 percent of the town has been preserved).

Afterwards, a transfer via minibus of approximately an hour brings you to Girona—one of Catalonia's major cities, with a remarkable historical center, well-preserved gothic churches, and intriguing traces of its rich Jewish heritage. End

Note that later addition shows Monday as 4 miles, easy to moderate – Starting in the walled town of Peratallada, ramble past wheat fields dotted with poppies on your way to Pals, a remarkable gothic town crowned with an 11th-century bell tower. Afterwards, transfer to Girona, one of Catalonia's major cities, and enjoy another meal of traditional dishes paired with fine local wines.

Dinner tonight is at the trendy Blanc, an elegant restaurant located just across the street from your hotel. You enjoy a modern take on Mediterranean-fusion cuisine, with possible dishes including pumpkin soup with mascarpone and basil, crispy fried artichokes, and red tuna tataki with tomato preserve, paired with fine local wines.

Hotel Nord 1901 Girona – for 2 nights: This four-star boutique hotel perfectly located in Girona's historical center provides easy walking access to all of the city's sites. Located on a quiet cobblestone street in the Old Town, this fully renovated building offers spacious and comfortable guest rooms with contemporary furnishings and neutral tones. END. We splurged for a suite. What's new!

Hotel Nord 1901. Quiet? Here is what I found from Tom on arrival and yes we have changed hotels: "UPDATE!! CONSTRUCTION STARTED AFTER LUNCH. Jackhammers, thunderous noise, awful. Manager here very sympathetic. Called a nearby okay hotel, they have a Jr. Suite. I just saw it we should move. Maybe a block and a half walk so you could keep the CW schedule. The car is already in a garage across the street from the new hotel. The hotel is bad and affects the entire neighborhood (but not the new hotel)."

Weather - it's only rained at night. So far. The weather has been reasonably mild. (My trainer would be proud to know that I carried all of my rain gear no matter. Extra water and any and everything I might need. Tom thought it was at least 40 pounds total.

Autumn has come weeks early. Hazelnuts fell weeks early. The entire van of hikers seems horrified at some folk's view that there isn't climate change. ALL past guides and seemingly all past hikers believe in the climate change problem. Or they were astute enough to be quiet.

Birds and wildlife. Our resort was in the middle of nowhere and Catalonia is noted for having so many birds and wildlife, that sounds at night were enchanting. Yet there was a silence and stillness. On the bus we were given a bit of a local wildlife photo show.

Terrain. Mountains, green, Mediterranean. Village is surrounded by more farming area than usual. Chestnut and Oak trees and lots of hazelnuts. Fields of sunflowers. Old abandoned factories along the river said to have been moved inland where factories and villages were created (and rather closed societies). There is a shortage of richness exposure but remember we are not that long out of the Franco regime suppression and unemployment overall is in the 30% range. There is a simplicity of living and a make-do attitude in the countryside that is rather charming for the visitor yet not necessarily my choice vacation spot. (Said by a Catalan: "France has more money").

Secession. The Catalans want to secede and will soon have another vote. They might be one of the few that has some logic because they do have a stronger economy. But I'm reminded that the northern area of Basque also wants to secede, as does the southern area of Andalusia so Madrid seems to have as many problems getting along as does America. In common with America is the fact that the big city areas generally vote to stay as one country whereas the country folks vote quite differently.

A book about Barcelona during the Franco regime is "shadows of the wind" by Carlos Ruiz Zafron. A Spanish classic translated into many languages on their bestseller list for years. Part historical novel,



part mystery, and much thought provoking. It has stayed with me for many years and should be read again.

American politics. I woke to the news of Trump giving the dreamers more reason to worry. It made my stomach churn. It also made me embarrassed for trying to be politically correct and not speaking up. Whatever to do? All of us seem to have the same point of view but have not spoken up for fear of dissension. Now look what we have!

- Some pictures from today follow. They include our stormy looking sky but it stayed clear and laugh. Some South African ants that are said to be taking over and I sure can believe it. They can carry 100 times their weight.
- To hilltop villages. We walked from one to the other which was about four boring miles.
- Sonya and I had a lovely lunch semi indoor/outdoor. It was so lovely that we managed to consume an entire bottle of wine.
- I happily gave up dinner so no more food photos.



## ***Tuesday – Day 4 of the tour***

It was 89° today. Yuck. With the possibility of rain tomorrow, I can't help but hope for it so it will cool the temp down. Yet how can I complain? I read that it was 109° in Rome recently, 112° in Santa Monica, and 106° in San Francisco. (There's no climate change?)

Clothing in hot weather. Have you noticed how short the short-shorts have gotten? Absolutely so gross that you know these girls do not have a rearview mirror. Most of them are not skinny little things either. Ha ha. There is another fad called under-boob (peek-a-boob vs cleavage) and I think the two are quite related and look somewhat alike.

From the itinerary: Girona walking tour: 2 ½ hours, free afternoon for independent exploration or optional walk along Girona's city walls and outskirts: 1-2 miles, easy to moderate, or 3.5 miles moderate.

Begin your day with a poolside breakfast on the terrace of your hotel, before venturing out onto the cobblestone streets of Girona with a local guide for an introduction to the highlights of Girona's old town. Explore a unique Romanesque and Gothic cathedral built on the foundation of a Roman forum, with portions dating back to the 6th century. A Jewish museum and neighborhood bear testament to Spain's once-thriving Jewish culture, before the expulsion of 1492. Narrow streets wind down to the Onyar River, which separates the old and new cities and fronts vibrantly painted "hanging houses" in the Catalan modernist style.

Your tour concludes in the local market, where you meet up with a representative from Girona Cook School who walks with you through the stalls, pointing out specialties and sharing highlights of the culture, before continuing to their kitchen for a tapas cooking demonstration and lunch.

The afternoon and evening are yours for independent exploration. You may choose to spend the time browsing shops, returning to historical sites of interest, or lingering in one of Girona's many cafés.

Alternately, you may join one of your guides for a late afternoon walk along the city's ancient defensive walls, enjoying panoramic views of the city and surrounding countryside before continuing on to the restaurant of your choice (with recommendations from your guides) for dinner. End.

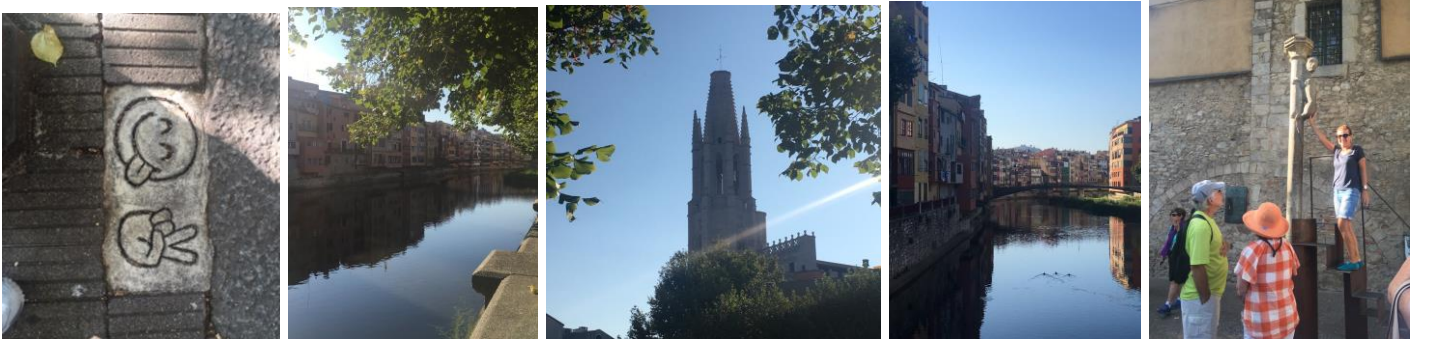
I think the itinerary for today was reasonably accurate though many of the days have been shuffled.

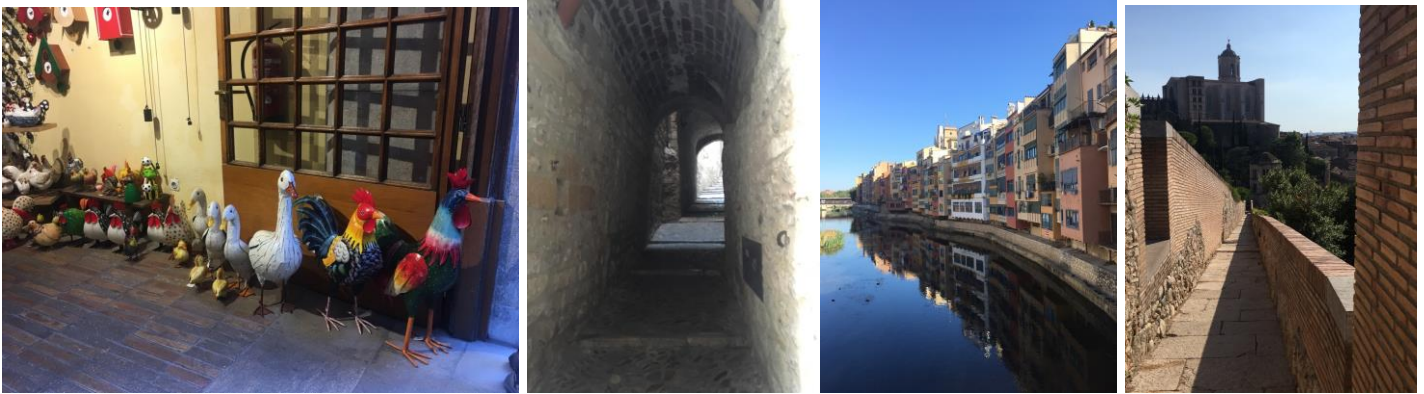
Pictures include:

- This is Independence Square; these dogs could be as independent as they wanted. You could ride them. Can you imagine a 250 square-foot apartment with these three dogs?
- Interesting graffiti. All along the Riverwalk, at curbside, were multiple cute drawings in the cement. Emoji?
- Probably the river is what makes this town important. It runs into the Mediterranean and this was always the entry into Spain for any and all wars and they have had a shocking number of them.
- The cathedral is on the river and it is said that to enter the town and have a good luck that you must kiss the rear end of their 11th century Lion. To make that easier someone has installed some metal or brass staircase. Art? This little gal decided not to kiss but just to touch.
- Outside of the cathedral is THE Roman Road. There were crowds of young people photographing the cathedral because it is the one you would recognize from Game of Thrones. Am I the only person who has never seen Game of Thrones? The cathedral's view was filmed in Dobrovnik Croatia.
- Some of you will know that the stairway is 90 steps. Those steps are full of little fossils reminding us that this area was covered by the sea. Their stone is said to be extremely hard.

- The cathedral is one of a kind and it was where the method for structural support was developed. In all of the world only Saint Peters in Rome is wider and bigger.
- The Jewish quarter is just as sad as all others. There was a time in the 1400s when the Jewish people were protected here by the King. Maybe because they were the kings bankers also. But it didn't last which is a story told over and over again around the world. See the picture of the very narrow old cobbled stairway Street and the half-size lower windows. Those windows are low because they used to be a door but the streets overtime, instead of being dug up, were paved over.

After a cooking class and demonstration which culminated in lunch, we had a couple hours free time before a walk on the ramparts. I can't over emphasize how many steps it took to get up and down the ramparts over and over again. I have done many ramparts including most recently those in Jerusalem but these were the more difficult to get to. These were also the most restored. I will save the cooking class for another time. It was not my favorite activity. The wine didn't come around till a little late in the game.





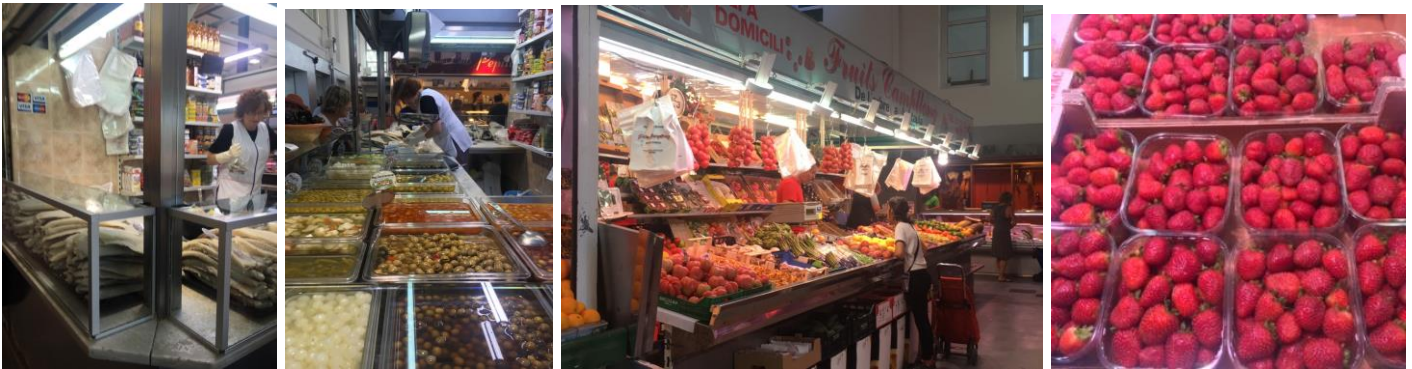
***Tuesday – Day 4 - cooking class after a trip to the market***

This was not my choice of activity. I thought I could sit through a cooking class so that I could eat. The price (Time and confusion) was too high. It was absolute cacophony. The market was even crazier with hordes of people and a whole lot of pretty silly questions. Sometimes I forget that I lived in Europe and know about markets and prior to that I lived in the far east when the markets were even outdoors. The languages took even more courage when no one had English and I didn't have Mandarin nor much French. So the mass amount of market product and people should not have been so uncomfortable yet I was sure glad to get out of there. Some of my fellow hikers must have been awestruck.

There was a very long and tedious (for me) cooking demonstration. It got hot, polluted with cooking smells, and lots of silly questions. The wine didn't come around until we were done cooking and I can see where that is a safety factor but it was not my style. And even then it was like pulling teeth to get the second glass of wine and don't forget that Sonya and I emptied one whole bottle for lunch yesterday.

Our guide and her helper moved through the market like she knew what she was doing, she had good English and lots of humor, and was very patient with her helpers who might have peeled wrong, or dumped the egg yolks in the wrong bowl, or turned the frittata onto the stove, or burned the crème brûlée with the torch, or whatever. I suspect she had seen it all. But maybe not such a bunch of chatterboxes.

By the way and in my defense I once cooked from gourmet magazine and I cooked most every day. But then I eased out as I decided that if it took longer to cook than to eat it that it was wasting my time. Fortunately Tom took up the kitchen duties when he retired in 1984 and seemed to enjoy cooking and we survived.





### **Wednesday – Day 5 of tour**

It is no secret that I don't like mornings. I like mornings even less when I am told to arrive earlier than the usual hour and then the guides don't show up. Even less yet when I had to run a couple blocks from a different hotel. Having said my complaining, I do admit that this entire group is more on time than most. I suspect that I am growing tired of groups.

Staying at a different hotel turned out to be fine and in fact when I saw heavy equipment at the tour hotel at 6:30 PM in loud operating mode, I knew Tom chose right. I added a couple pictures of the front and the side of the host hotel.

I should add some information about Girona from the web. It's an interesting city: Girona is a city in Spain's northeastern Catalonia region, beside the River Onyar. It's known for its medieval architecture, walled Old Quarter (Barri Vell) and the Roman remains of the Força Vella fortress. Landscaped gardens line the Passeig Arqueològic, a walkway following the Old Quarter's medieval walls, which include watchtowers with sweeping views. More? See

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girona>

Per itinerary: The Empordà Plains: Peratallada to Begur via Pals: 2-6 miles, easy to moderate; transfer to Cadaqués

Later change: Sant Pere de Rodes Monastery. 1.5-4 miles, easy to moderate. Make your way into the legendary Costa Brava today, and discover the majestic 10th-century Sant Pere de Rodes monastery before embarking on a scenic ridge walk affording panoramic views of the Gulf of Roses and Cap de Creus. Later, visit a family-run winery for a private tasting of its award-winning vintages before continuing on to Cadaqués.

Still from the web with portions that we've already done: Today you make your way into the legendary Costa Brava, with stops at picturesque hilltop towns along the way. Begin your exploration near the walled town of Peratallada, named for a deep moat sculpted into the bedrock that surrounds the town (pedra tallada means "carved stone"). After taking time to stroll through its rutted stone streets and pause in its arcaded central square, you continue on into the beautiful countryside surrounding. Rambling along dirt paths through wheat fields dotted with poppies, you pass vineyards and olive and fruit trees on your way to Pals, a remarkable gothic town crowned with an 11th-century bell tower. Here, you'll explore cobbled streets vaulted by stone arches and enjoy sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. Take time to marvel at some of Pals's ancient history as well: portions of its Church of Saint Pere date back to the sixth century.

After briefly exploring Pals, you continue on through more pastoral farmland to Begur, located on a hill beside the Mediterranean. (Either or both stretches of today's walk, from Peratallada to Pals or from Pals to Begur, may be skipped via a minibus transfer). In Begur, enjoy a well-deserved lunch at a popular café and explore the town—known for its casas de indianos, mansions built by locals who emigrated to Cuba during the 1700s and came back after having made fortunes in the New World.

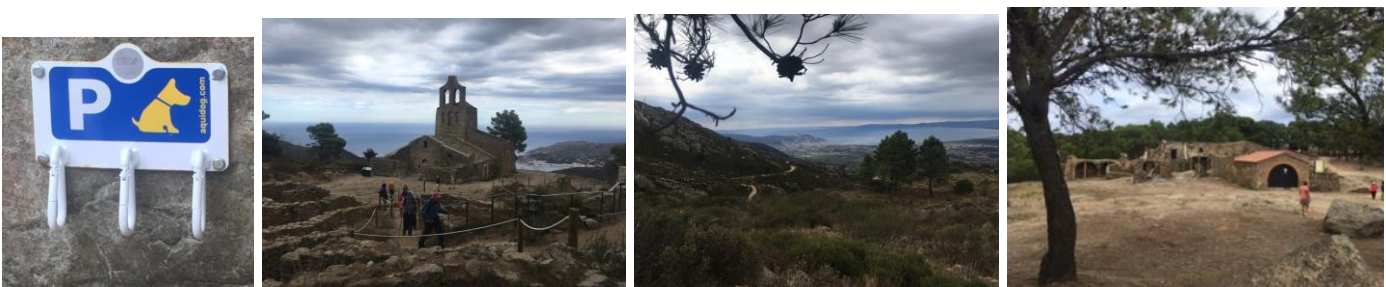
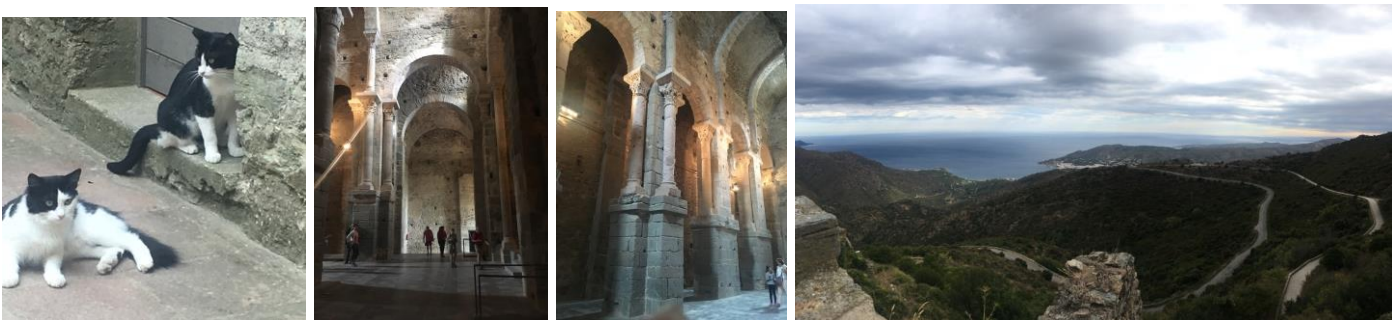
Late afternoon, transfer via minibus to the Espelt winery, an award-winning family-run bodega, where you delight in a private tasting surrounded by their grape arbors. Afterward, you continue on to Cadaqués, your home for the next two nights. Cap your day with a dock-fresh seafood dinner at a local restaurant, enjoying dishes like mussels in spicy sauce, grilled dorado, gambas al ajillo (shrimp in garlic sauce), and tuna carpaccio.

Hotel Playa Sol, Cadaqués – 2 nights - With an ideal seaside location and renovated facility, the Hotel Playa Sol is a barefoot-chic escape in one of the Costa Brava's most dreamy towns. Guests may enjoy sea-view rooms with contemporary furniture and balconies, relax in the outdoor pool, or wander its garden of olive trees before grabbing a drink from its terrace bar.

Our lunch was at the winery and we showed up after 2pm and still had to listen to the owner's lecture pre-lunch. We ate a magnificent family created meal until 4:45pm. Dinner at 8pm. Ha ha ha. Country Waddlers. About half of the hikers did decide to forgo dinner.

Observation. Of four couples, they all look like twins or at least brother-sister. Do we marry someone like ourselves or do we grow to be similar?

Pictures? I'll have to label them later and hope I remember what they are. I am already a day behind. Are we having fun yet? (I'm tired).





**Thursday – Day 6 or next to last day of tour** and only one day until we are on our own in Barcelona.

Can you tell I'm a little impatient with the hiking group? The hiking in the scenery have been good. It's a good group of folks - they just don't know how to keep moving. Walk four minutes and stop and talk and talk.

For today and from the web itinerary: Cap de Creus to Port Lligat to Cadaques walk; 4.5 to 5 miles, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation loss. (Later changed to 1/2 of it strenuous and I agree).

Your day begins with a boat ride across the Bay of Cadaqués on your way to





the Cap de Creus natural area. Upon arrival, you disembark beside the lighthouse at the cape's tip for a beautiful walk beside the sea (non-walkers may return to Cadaqués aboard the boat). With a landscape of low Mediterranean vegetation, coastal cliffs, and hidden coves, you soak up aquamarine water views while passing ancient stone walls and olive groves. The route passes into Port Lligat on your way to Salvador Dalí's home museum, where you stop for a simple but delicious lunch before visiting the one-of-a-kind exhibition.

Dalí's roots on the Costa Brava run deep: he was born just inland in Figueres and vacationed in Cadaqués yearly with his family. In fact, it was here that the artist began learning to paint. It's no wonder, then, that he returned to the region to build his home after World War II. In his Port Lligat house, Dalí lived and worked up until his wife's death in 1982. Today, you can see some of his installations, his studio, and the private residence where he lived.

This afternoon is yours to enjoy at your leisure, perhaps exploring Cadaqués, relaxing on the beach, or swimming in the hotel pool. For your farewell dinner this evening, you head to an exceptional restaurant in the historical center of the town. Here you enjoy a feast of dishes that combine modern innovations (molecular gastronomy was perfected on Cap de Creus) and hearty Catalan favorites elevated in surprising ways. Together with your fellow travelers, you toast the week's adventures one last time before heading back to the hotel. End

The boat was an old historic 100 year old wooden boat. I hadn't realized that I would have to go out on a floating dock and get into a little zodiac in order to get on the boat. And then when we landed we had to scoot down into the zodiac and then run aground to get off. And probably no one realized that their famous strong winds would come up and we would ride an hour and a half with spray on our face and big rocking hitting motions. We called it an adventure.

Only four of us decided to do the tougher than usual rocky hike about three hours. The rest either never came along, or decided at the last minute not to get on the boat, or decided to take the boat back to the town.

Some of those were probably wise but those of us who chose to hike enjoyed it. It was also tough enough that I was a little puny the next day. We climbed up the shale mountainside to start the hike and that shell was pretty much sideways. We battled the winds and held on at times. We saw nude snorkelers and sunbathers in secluded bays.

The goal was to get to the restaurant three hours later and meet up with our fellow non-hikers. As usual it was far too much food but we ate it anyway and then scooted down the hill to the Salvador Dali home and museum. He was weird. Where'd had just come down that the DNA by their child claiming to be his was not true. Having read accounts and bios about him I never expected that all of his sexual crazy endeavors could have produced a child.

Dinner came far too soon even though it was 8 PM. It was quite spectacular but not one that we would ever do again. Read above about the micro bio method of food preparation. It was odd.

Pictures:

Out our balcony and the morning's moon over the other side of the inlet.

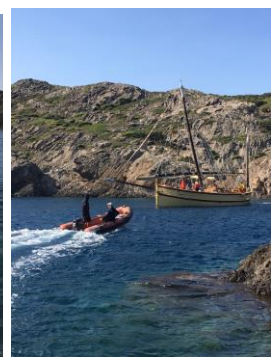
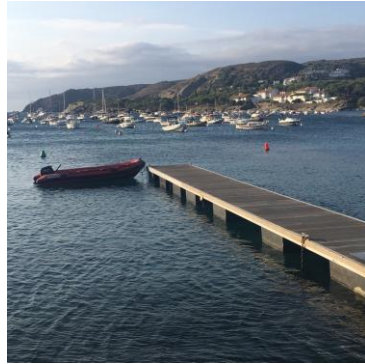
The menu from guide Derek: "As requested, here is last night's menu from the Compartir restaurant in Cadaqués. I'm translating this from Spanish, and the descriptions are less than complete, so feel free to chime in with any details! Yum."

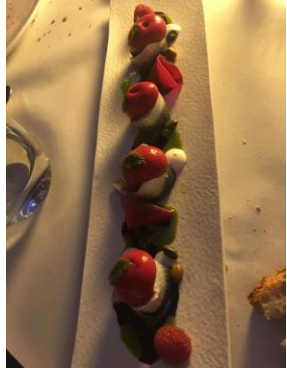
Coffee, passionfruit and a welcome cocktail.

Ensalada de alcachofas con pasas y sorbete de almendras a la vainilla

Sardines with beetroot foam, raspberries and pistachios

Oysters with mandarine cream  
Tuna cannelloni with Mediterranean flavors  
Anchovies with basil and truffle  
Codfish bunyols with honey "air"  
Poached egg with potato parmentier and black truffles  
Iberian rice with black trumpets  
Iberian pork sirloin, Pibil style  
Cheesecake  
Liquid chocolate bonbons with blackcurrant sorbet  
Wines.







***Friday - Day 7 and last day of the hike.***

I was rather pleased that it was the last day and even considered missing it and simply driving back to Barcelona with Tom. But the write up suggested a tourist site that I would enjoy experiencing and that turned to be true.

Tom had treated himself to a BMW 7 which looked more like a limo than not. I would think that he enjoyed the little curvy windy roads but I know that he did not enjoy the first day and being so lost.

Incidentally, we now see on USA Today's 52 places one must see is our first lodge which was extremely remote. And pricey.

From the itinerary: Visit to archaeological site of Empúries;

After breakfast, you bid farewell to Cadaqués and transfer to the Greco-Roman ruins of Empúries, a seaside port and one of the most monumental feats of ancient engineering on the Iberian Peninsula. Here, you'll learn about the construction of its massive breakwater, walled Roman precinct, and ancient paleo-Christian basilica while touring the site. End.

From the web: [One of the most important archeological sites in Catalonia!](#)

The Ruins de Empuries are Greek and Roman ruins situated in an absolutely [stunning location just behind the beautiful beach of Sant Marti de Empuries](#), in the picturesque Gulf of Roses on the Costa Brava.

The Empuries Ruins are an ancient port city, known to the Greeks as Emporion (meaning market) who created the city in the 6th century B.C. and to the Romans as Emporiae, who created a new city at the same location at the beginning of the 1st century B.C.

The Greek/Roman ruins at Empuries were considered to be the gateway to the Iberian Peninsula for the classical cultures.

The ancient city of Empuries was abandoned in the second half of the 3rd century as Girona, Barcelona and Tarragona grew in size and became more important. The Empuries people didn't go

very far though, just a kilometre or so up the beach to the beautiful tiny village of Sant Marti d'Empuries.

The Empuries Ruins were discovered in 1908 and excavations are still going on. Presently, only 25% of the large site has been excavated. So a lot more treasures await discovery.

I think the loveliest things at the ruins are the beautiful [roman mosaics floors](#). End

Pictures include the Seaside docks said to be over 3000 years old.

A very modern visitor center and museum complete with an auditorium and film.

A super scruffy young fellow who was our guide and seemingly an expert; I guess you don't have time to both study and clean up.

We were dropped at the host hotel and I hurried over to our pre-tour hotel to meet up with Tom. We would then check into a most elegant and lovely apartment in a historically 1908 Gaudi inspired and significant building where we have stayed twice before. It might be the richest apartment we have stayed and we continue to wonder why anyone would have paid the price for the decorating pieces and then rent it out. My 2014 trip reports give me any more pictures of the apartment.

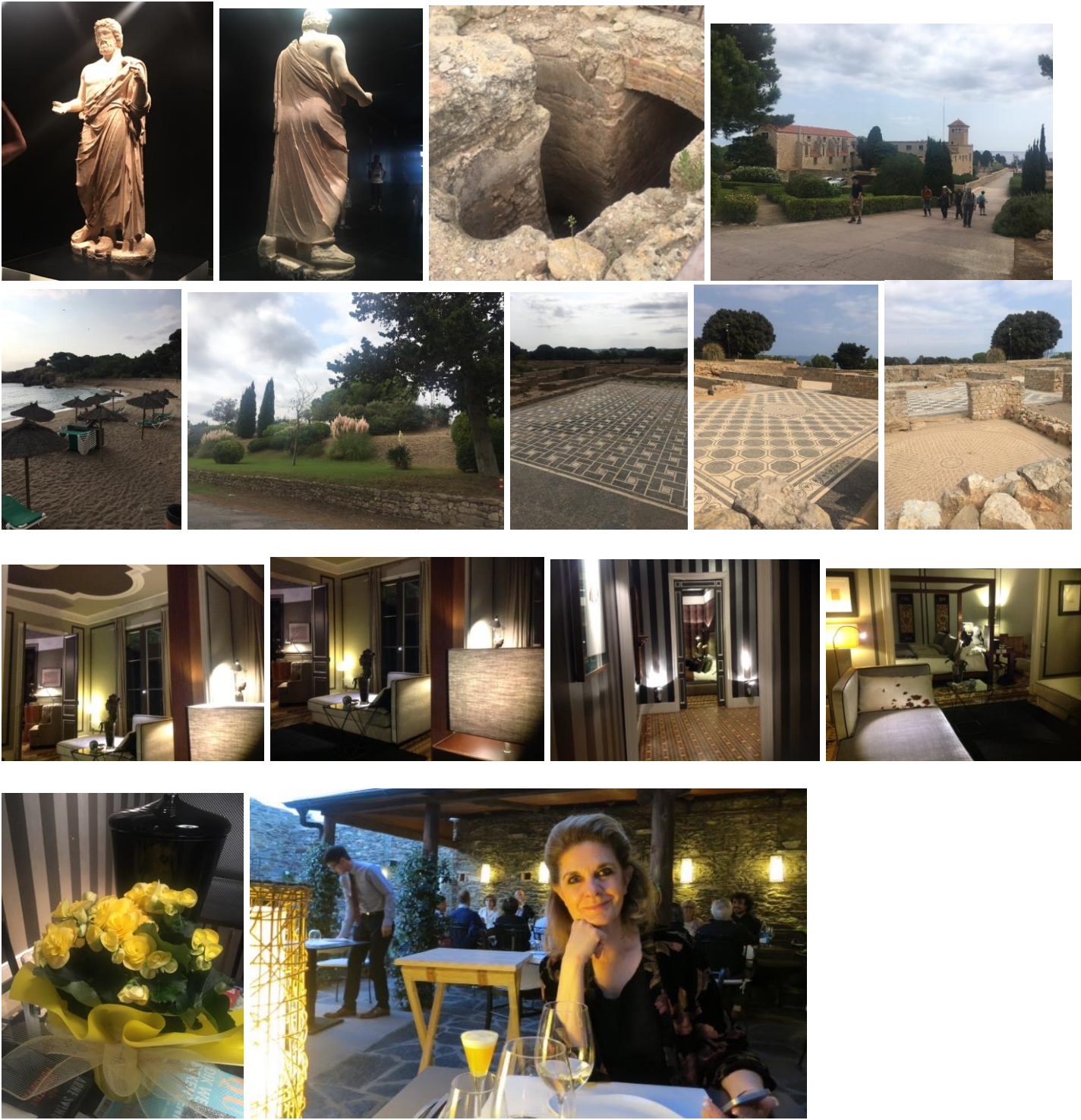
I did the grocery and alcohol shopping and then went to the florist. The yellow ruffled begonias make me smile.

Sonya joined us for pates, cheeses, nuts, a potato frittata, salad, breads, wines, and spoiled us with a selection of elegant chocolates and cronuts. I should have photographed the desert but not the simple dinner. It's all I can do anymore to shop for semi-prepared foods -- besides the fact that we were all pretty full and tired of food from the very gourmand week.

We would end our day with a goodbye to Sonya for the present and I imagine we all then had a very good sleep. For me it was 10 - 12 hours before I woke from natural causes. A treat to forgo an alarm clock.

Ps. I think I just got two days wrapped into one. One day was a wash or known as a lay-day.





Sunday evening performance at Palau de Musica.- More from Barcelona by Tom:





### ***The last of Barcelona***

From Rick Steves: I'm often asked about the difference between a tourist and a traveler. To me, a tourist visits all the big sights, sees spectacles on stage and returns home unchanged with a suitcase full of knickknacks. A traveler becomes a temporary local, engages with the culture and comes home enriched, with a vivid collection of experiences and a broader perspective.

Frankly, I think we got a bit more local flavor than we wanted.

We were told there would be demonstrations and protest but expected it to be about two blocks away. Darn but the staging area for the buses was our front door. Fortunately they all looked calm, collected and peaceful but I didn't think we should be in the crowds so we simply watched it from our bay window. All day.

This was their independence day and showing support for an upcoming secession vote.

[A good description of the succession effort](#) and demonstrations of 9-11. The demonstrations started about two blocks from our apartment and I have pictures from our bay window of some of the 1800 buses that were chartered to bring demonstrators in from outside the city. They were unloading their flag draped protesters on our street corner.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20170911-spain-barcelona-catalonia-mass-rally-catalan-independence>

If flags and signs are any indication, this area will vote yes.

### **From the web: Catalan independence is likely to get much messier.**

The fight between the Spanish government and pro-independence politicians in Catalonia took another twist this week, with the Catalan parliament narrowly passing a law that approved an [October 1 referendum](#) on the issue.

The question of independence for Catalonia, a region in Spain's northeast centered around the city of Barcelona, is far from a new one. Catalonia has its own distinctive culture and history, as well as its own well-established local government system. But the issue has become increasingly tense over the past few years, largely due to anger over Spain's economic problems after the 2008 financial crash and Madrid's refusal to acknowledge the growing demand within Catalonia for some kind of political change. Proponents of independence point towards Scotland's 2014 referendum, which took place with British government approval, as a model. "The Scottish way is the way we want to follow," said Carles Puigdemont, the president of the government of Catalonia, to [Today's WorldView](#) earlier this year. But the Spanish government has other ideas. ["There will be no referendum on self-determination," said Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy on Thursday](#), according to [the newspaper El Pais](#). The government argues that any referendum without their approval would run afoul of the country's 1978 constitution. In a 2014 ruling, Spain's constitutional court agreed and declared a proposed Catalan independence referendum illegal (the vote was subsequently changed to be a non-binding "consultation"). The situation is tense. [Spanish prosecutors have said they would bring criminal](#)

charges against members of Catalonia's parliament if the vote goes ahead. Separately, 11 Catalan lawmakers were enraged earlier this week when they were handed a \$6.1 million bill by a Spanish court for the 2014 consultation. Could there still be a compromise? Don't count on it. Some suspect that pro-independence forces in Catalonia are hoping for an overreaction from Rajoy that may buoy dimming support for their cause. In a recent interview with the Financial Times, Puigdemont suggested he'd be willing to go to jail over the vote. Meanwhile, Rajoy's staunch opposition to a referendum is popular outside of Catalonia. If the brinkmanship continues, the chance of a relatively polite Scottish-style vote looks nonexistent. Instead, we may see something closer to the divisive and disruptive Brexit vote — and potentially far worse. — *Adam Taylor. End.*

**For us, the next morning would get pretty messy too.** We had booked a car with the apartment manager for 8:30 AM to the airport. It didn't show, it was pouring rain, and 20 minutes later I still had no luck hailing a taxi. I was getting pretty nervous. A stranger offered to take us to a taxi stand and in that confusion of removing luggage from the stranger's car to the taxi we left Tom's carry-on behind. His new iPhone 7, new Bose sound canceling headset, camera, multiple computer cords, prescription sunglasses, lots of cash, cards and IDs, etc.; there was nothing to be done and we had to realize that it was just "stuff". Just irritation. Life would go on.

We did make it to the airport on time but with no time to spare.

Would we remember Barcelona for the wonderful sites and the palace of music show the night before? I hope!

Here are some of Tom's pictures of our walk around the iconic Gaudi's Sagrada Familia and some from inside the palace of Music where we saw an opera and flamenco show.

Then some pictures by Sonya of a chocolate shop. She brought us far too many!

Pictures from our bay window to the unloading buses.







Extras not on web or printed:





## ***Itinerary***

### **Wed Aug 30 – Day 1**

7:15pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#120 – 7:50 hrs

### **Thu Aug 31 – Day 2**

9:05am Arrive Barcelona BCN

Host Hotel Hotel Midmost Barcelona  
Carrer Pelai, 14, Barcelona, Spain Tel 011 34 935 051 100

Hotel Le Meridien – 2 nights  
La Rambla 111, Barcelona, 08002 Spain Tele (34) (93) 318 6200

Sonya: American Airlines 50

Depart: DFW August 30, 2017 3:55 PM - Arrive: LHR August 31, 2017 6:55 AM

America Airlines 6728 operated by British Airways

Depart: LHR August 31, 2017 9:35 AM - Arrive: BCN August 31, 2017 12:45 PM

Sonya at Hotel MidMost about 4 blocks away

### **Fri Sep 1 – Day 3**

Open for touring

### **Sat Sep 2 – Tom**

11:30am Pick up Avis rental car (near to) train station  
Barcelona Ciudad Downtown, S4X, Corsega 293/Rbla Catalunya, Barcelona  
Tele Avis: 34 902 1 10275 and note limited hours of 8-5pm on Saturday

### **Sat Sep 2 – Day 4 and Day 1 of hike**

8:00am Start hike at host hotel, Hotel Midmost Barcelona (address above)

Overview from [www.CountryWalkers.com](http://www.CountryWalkers.com) - Enjoy the spectacular mountain views, charming seaside villages, unique culture, and ancient history of Catalonia—a region often considered its own country within the boundaries of Spain. Here, in the company of exceptional local guides, you can explore the dormant cinder cones of ancient volcanoes, now lushly carpeted with oak trees. Stroll the gothic streets of Girona, discovering its rich history and massive Romanesque cathedral. In landscapes of wildflower dotted fields, stone hilltop towns, and seaside cliffs, delight in walks that reveal the region's hidden charms. Savor the local terroir during a private wine tasting at a family-run vineyard and the exceptional flavors of Catalan cuisine during meals at highly regarded restaurants. Through it all, you stay in gracious, authentic accommodations that keep you close to all the highlights while still offering a luxurious oasis of calm.

Montserrat; 3-5 miles, easy to moderate; transfer to Garrotxa Volcanic Natural Park

After a brief welcome gathering at your hotel, bid farewell to Barcelona as you head inland to nearby Montserrat, an imposing mountain in the pre-coastal Catalan range. Famous for its almost organic-seeming rock formations and Benedictine abbey, this mountain is often considered the “heart” of Catalonia by locals (the Caribbean island of the same name was christened by homesick Catalan sailors).

Upon arrival, a 10-minute ride on the Sant Joan funicular brings you near the summit, where spectacular views await. To the east, you can see Barcelona and the Mediterranean on clear days, to

the north the distant saw teeth of the Pyrenees, and below you on the mountainside, the Santa Maria de Montserrat monastery. In this setting, enjoy a 1½-hour walk along a well-maintained (though occasionally rocky) path up to the topmost peak, Sant Jeroni. From here, you may either continue down to the monastery on foot (a relatively steep trail with a significant number of steps) or, for an easier option, via the funicular.

Upon arrival at the monastery, you'll be treated to a performance by its acclaimed boys' choir, which sings daily at 1:00 p.m. Santa Maria de Montserrat is also famous for its "Black Madonna"—a statue of a dark-skinned Virgin Mary that some believe was carved in Jerusalem during the early days of the church (though most art historians date it later). Today, Mare de Déu de Montserrat is the patron saint of Catalonia.

After visiting the monastery, you enjoy a feast of traditional Catalan cuisine at a nearby monastery restaurant with sweeping views of the valley below. Starters may include pa amb tomaquet (crusty country bread with tomato and garlic), jamón ibérico (Spanish cured ham), cod balls, chorizitos (small chorizo sausages), and calamari. Main courses may include lamb cutlets, entrecote or cod in honey, roasted chicken with rosemary, or fideos (a paella-style seafood dish made with noodles). Satisfied from lunch, you relax on a 1½-hour minibus transfer to Garrotxa Volcanic Natural Park—an inland region of rolling hills, gorges, and lush forest in the foothills of the Pyrenees and your home for the next two nights. After checking in at your accommodations, gather with fellow guests on the patio for an aperitif and asado barbecue.

Hotel Finca El Ventós, Sant Feliu de Pallerols – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Ctra. De Sant scle De Colltort  
Sant (or St.) Feliu de Pallerols, 17174 Spain, Tel 011 34 972 107 962  
Email [hotel@elventos.com](mailto:hotel@elventos.com) [www.fincaelventos.com](http://www.fincaelventos.com)

A recently renovated traditional and stone farmhouse on a mountaintop, El Ventós enjoys panoramic views which, on a clear day, extend all the way to the sea. Spacious guest rooms blend modern and rustic, with terracotta tile floors, white walls, large windows, and antiques. In addition to the main fireside lounge—with exposed beams and cozy seating looking out onto a large terrace—there are hammocks, a "cyber corner", a reading room, and an outdoor swimming pool set on almost 1,000 acres of grounds with gardens and trails. The excellent on-site restaurant features the property's own or very local products.

### **Sun Sep 3 – Day 5 and DAY 2 of hike**

El Ventós circuit: 5.5 or 8.5 miles, easy to moderate, 985-ft. elevation gain and 1310-ft. loss; Note that later addition said 5-6 miles.

Today's walk provides an ideal introduction to the region surrounding your hotel. Created in 1985, Garrotxa Volcanic Natural Park is—as its name implies—home to 30 dormant conical volcanoes that last erupted only 11,000 years ago. This unique geology (there is no other region like it in Europe) has resulted in rich soils of ochre and black lava, which contrast beautifully with the region's beech forests and verdant meadows. The park hosts over a thousand plant species, as well as animals ranging from wild boar to foxes, rabbits, weasels, and hedgehogs.

In this beautiful setting, you trace a path entirely within the hotel's estate, which leads up through the forest to a lookout that provides stunning views of the entire region, including upcoming highlights from your itinerary—tomorrow's walk in the next valley and the distant Cape of Creus jutting into the Mediterranean just below the French border. Later addition to itinerary: You'll discover the beautiful 13<sup>th</sup>-century place major (or Main Square) of Santa Pau.

In a scenic field, you sit down for a picnic lunch from your hotel's kitchen. After, continue on for another hour walk along a wooded trail and paved road to return to your accommodations. Take time to relax before savoring a delicious, seasonal dinner in the hotel's elegant restaurant.

Please note: guests may shorten today's walk by transferring back to the hotel via jeep after lunch.

Hotel Finca El Ventós, Sant Feliu de Pallerols – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

### **Mon Sep 4 – Day 6 and DAY 3 of hike**

San Miguel to Santa Pau: 5-6 miles, easy to moderate, 950-ft. elevation gain and 1,310-ft. elevation loss; Transfer to Girona

Today's activities begin with a 20-minute transfer to the trailhead, from where you begin a walk that skirts below high volcanic cliffs and traverses fields dotted with small stone farmhouses (or mas). Soon, the landscape gives way to the thick beech forest of Jordá. After about an hour of walking, you emerge near a small café, where you may pause for a morning coffee before an optional detour to the Santa Margarida Volcano. Here, you'll find a unique Romanesque hermitage in the grassy crater at its center.

Pressing on, the path continues through lush vegetation to arrive in Santa Pau, a small medieval village with a beautiful 13th-century plac major (or main square) surrounded by arcaded stone buildings. Here, you'll enjoy a well-deserved lunch of local specialties, perhaps including the town's protected heirloom crop: fesols, an indigenous bean cultivated in the volcanic soil. While in town, you'll have a chance to admire some of its buildings "of Cultural Interest," including a Romanesque church, a castle, and many others (over 80 percent of the town has been preserved).

Afterwards, a transfer via minibus of approximately an hour brings you to Girona—one of Catalonia's major cities, with a remarkable historical center, well-preserved gothic churches, and intriguing traces of its rich Jewish heritage.

Note that later addition shows Monday as 4 miles, easy to moderate – Starting in the walled town of Peratallada, ramble past wheat fields dotted with poppies on your way to Pals, a remarkable gothic town crowned with an 11<sup>th</sup>-century bell tower. Afterwards, transfer to Girona, one of Catalonia's major cities, and enjoy another meal of traditional dishes paired with fine local wines.

Dinner tonight is at the trendy Blanc, an elegant restaurant located just across the street from your hotel. You enjoy a modern take on Mediterranean-fusion cuisine, with possible dishes including pumpkin soup with mascarpone and basil, crispy fried artichokes, and red tuna tataki with tomato preserve, paired with fine local wines.

Hotel Nord 1901 Hotel, Girona – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Carrer Nord, 7-9, Girona, 17001, Spain Tel 011 34 972 411 522  
Email [info@nord1901.com](mailto:info@nord1901.com) [www.nord1901.com](http://www.nord1901.com)

This four-star boutique hotel perfectly located in Girona's historical center provides easy walking access to all of the city's sites. Located on a quiet cobblestone street in the Old Town, this fully renovated building offers spacious and comfortable guest rooms with contemporary furnishings and neutral tones.

### **Tue Sep 5 – Day 7 and DAY 4 of hike**

Girona walking tour: 2-3 miles, 2 ½ hours, easy; **free afternoon** for independent exploration or optional walk along Girona's city walls and outskirts: 1-2 miles, easy to moderate, or 3.5 miles moderate.

Begin your day with a poolside breakfast on the terrace of your hotel (weather permitting), before venturing out onto the cobblestone streets of Girona with a local guide for an introduction to the highlights of Girona's old town. Explore a unique Romanesque and Gothic cathedral built on the foundation of a Roman forum, with portions dating back to the 6th century. A Jewish museum and neighborhood bear testament to Spain's once-thriving Jewish culture, before the expulsion of 1492. Narrow streets wind down to the Onyar River, which separates the old and new cities and fronts vibrantly painted "hanging houses" in the Catalan modernist style.

Your tour concludes in the local market, where you meet up with a representative from Girona Cook School who walks with you through the stalls, pointing out specialties and sharing highlights of the culture, before continuing to their kitchen for a tapas cooking demonstration and lunch.

The afternoon and evening are yours for independent exploration. You may choose to spend the time browsing shops, returning to historical sites of interest, or lingering in one of Girona's many cafés.

Alternately, you may join one of your guides for a late afternoon walk along the city's ancient defensive walls, enjoying panoramic views of the city and surrounding countryside before continuing on to the restaurant of your choice (with recommendations from your guides) for dinner. **No dinner provided.**

Hotel Nord 1901 Hotel, Girona – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

### **Wed Sep 6 – Day 8 and DAY 5 of hike**

The Empordà Plains: Peratallada to Begur via Pals: 2-6 miles, easy to moderate; transfer to Cadaqués

Later change: Sant Pere de Rodes Monastery. 1.5-4 miles, easy to moderate. Make your way into the legendary Costa Brava today, and discover the majestic 10<sup>th</sup>-century Sant Pere de Rodes monastery before embarking on a scenic ridge walk affording panoramic views of the Gulf of Roses and Cap de Creus. Later, visit a family-run winery for a private tasting of its award-winning vintages before continuing on to Cadaques.

Today you make your way into the legendary Costa Brava, with stops at picturesque hilltop towns along the way. Begin your exploration near the walled town of Peratallada, named for a deep moat sculpted into the bedrock that surrounds the town (pedra tallada means "carved stone"). After taking time to stroll through its rutted stone streets and pause in its arcaded central square, you continue on into the beautiful countryside surrounding. Rambling along dirt paths through wheat fields dotted with poppies, you pass vineyards and olive and fruit trees on your way to Pals, a remarkable gothic town crowned with an 11th-century bell tower. Here, you'll explore cobbled streets vaulted by stone arches and enjoy sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. Take time to marvel at some of Pals's ancient history as well: portions of its Church of Saint Pere date back to the sixth century.

After briefly exploring Pals, you continue on through more pastoral farmland to Begur, located on a hill beside the Mediterranean. (Either or both stretches of today's walk, from Peratallada to Pals or from Pals to Begur, may be skipped via a minibus transfer). In Begur, enjoy a well-deserved lunch at a popular café and explore the town—known for its casas de indianos, mansions built by locals who emigrated to Cuba during the 1700s and came back after having made fortunes in the New World.

Late afternoon, transfer via minibus to the Espelt winery, an award-winning family-run bodega, where you delight in a private tasting surrounded by their grape arbors. Afterward, you continue on to Cadaqués, your home for the next two nights. Cap your day with a dock-fresh seafood dinner at a

local restaurant, enjoying dishes like mussels in spicy sauce, grilled dorado, gambas al ajillo (shrimp in garlic sauce), and tuna carpaccio.

Hotel            Hotel Playa Sol, Cadaqués – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Riba es Planc, 3, Costa Brava, E-17488 Cadaqués, Spain Tel 011 34 972 258 100  
Email [playasol@playasol.com](mailto:playasol@playasol.com) [www.playasol.com](http://www.playasol.com)

With an ideal seaside location and renovated facility, the Hotel Playa Sol is a barefoot-chic escape in one of the Costa Brava's most dreamy towns. Guests may enjoy sea-view rooms with contemporary furniture and balconies, relax in the outdoor pool, or wander its garden of olive trees before grabbing a drink from its terrace bar. Amenities include room service, free Wi-Fi, and available outdoor tennis courts.

### **Thu Sep 7 – Day 9 and DAY 6 of hike**

Cap de Creus to Port Lligat to Cadaques walk; 4.5 to 5 miles, easy to moderate, 650-ft. elevation loss

Your day begins with a boat ride across the Bay of Cadaqués on your way to the Cap de Creus natural area. Upon arrival, you disembark beside the lighthouse at the cape's tip for a beautiful walk beside the sea (non-walkers may return to Cadaqués aboard the boat). With a landscape of low Mediterranean vegetation, coastal cliffs, and hidden coves, you soak up aquamarine water views while passing ancient stone walls and olive groves. The route passes into Port Lligat on your way to Salvador Dalí's home museum, where you stop for a simple but delicious lunch before visiting the one-of-a-kind exhibition.

Dalí's roots on the Costa Brava run deep: he was born just inland in Figueres and vacationed in Cadaqués yearly with his family. In fact, it was here that the artist began learning to paint. It's no wonder, then, that he returned to the region to build his home after World War II. In his Port Lligat house, Dalí lived and worked up until his wife's death in 1982. Today, you can see some of his installations, his studio, and the private residence where he lived.

This **afternoon is yours to enjoy at your leisure**, perhaps exploring Cadaqués, relaxing on the beach, or swimming in the hotel pool. For your farewell dinner this evening, you head to an exceptional restaurant in the historical center of the town. Here you enjoy a feast of dishes that combine modern innovations (molecular gastronomy was perfected on Cap de Creus) and hearty Catalan favorites elevated in surprising ways. Together with your fellow travelers, you toast the week's adventures one last time before heading back to the hotel.

Hotel            Hotel Playa Sol, Cadaqués – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

### **Fri Sep 8 – Day 10 and DAY 7 of hike**

Visit to archaeological site of Empúries; Departure from Barcelona

After breakfast, you bid farewell to Cadaqués and transfer to the Greco-Roman ruins of Empúries, a seaside port and one of the most monumental feats of ancient engineering on the Iberian Peninsula. Here, you'll learn about the construction of its massive breakwater, walled Roman precinct, and ancient paleo-Christian basilica while touring the site. Afterward, continue on via minibus to Barcelona, where you may transfer to the **train station** or airport for onward travels or continue your explorations of this vibrant city on your own.

2:00pm            End of hike at Hotel Midmost Barcelona  
Carrer Pelai, 14, Barcelona, Spain Tel 011 34 935 051 100

2:00pm Turn in rental car at Avis train station – Tom and Diana meet up there?  
Then taxi to apartment? Address below and on reservation form

Apt Carrer de Roger de Llúria 82, 08009 Barcelona, Spain – 4 nights

As of 6/22/17, Aleix Alsius Corbera at 00 34 690 69 34 35 says: The booking it's confirmed. In order to organise you check in, we will need to know your approximately arrival time to Barcelona from the Costa Brava. Maybe the best option is that you could contact during your stay in Costa Brava and we could try to fix the best hour for you for the check in. Later agreed to calling from the train station at about 2pm.

*Luxury Suite II is state-of-the-art 120m2 apartment with one suite with king size bed 2 x 2 m and another suite with twin beds that can be separated. A living area with two chaise longue is the perfect space to chill and relax. The apartment counts with a very spacious bathroom with a double shower and bathtub and another ensuite bathroom.*

*The apartment is fully equipped with top brand appliances, including three 46-inch flat screen TVs with international channels and there is an audio system in every room, which can be customized so you can create a different atmosphere in any room. We have another "sister" apartment, Luxury Suite I with similar features and style but with one bedroom, which can be rented together or separately. The total capacity of these two is 6 people and there is a possibility of placing an extra bed for a child. Both apartments share common access area as shown in the pictures. Our guests will be delighted to experience this unique Luxury Suite experience. Features and Facilities - Internet access, DVD player, Staffed property, Boat available; Central heating, Air conditioning, TV, CD player, Telephone, Safe, Satellite TV, Wi-Fi; Kettle, Toaster, Iron, Hair dryer; Clothes dryer, Dishwasher, Cooker, Microwave, Fridge, Freezer, Washing machine; Linen provided, Towels provided, Outdoors - Balcony or terrace*

*Located within the historic building Jaume Forn, built by architect Domenec Boadain 1904. Modernist style, with special moulded ceilings, floors and hydraulic angle leaded glass windows by the company Rigalt i Granell. All these elements have been recovered and carefully restored to preserve the property style. The remodeling was done with a prestigious interior designer achieving a contemporary and elegant result aiming for maximum customization in order to get a sense of comfort and exclusivity for guests. To achieve this we used the best materials, fabrics and have carefully selected paintings, antiques and a splendid library (Guinovart, Frederic Mares, Millares, Sert). Privileged location: Two blocks from Paseo de Gracia, on the fourth floor this is a corner building facing south with lots of natural light throughout the day. At the same crossing there are four houses with these characteristics; high-quality original architecture. The facade, the concierge, the location gives you the feeling of experiencing the Example at its best. This property is staffed, meaning that the apartment is cleaned every day. We offer concierge services for planning activities like sailing, wine tasting or getting tickets to a football match or concert in advance.*

Hotel-Sonya Hotel Midmost - 3 nights

Pelai, 14, 08001 Barcelona, Spain Tele: 34 93 505 11 00

Email [info@hotelmidmost.com](mailto:info@hotelmidmost.com) <https://www.hotelmidmost.com/en>

### **Sat Sep 9 – Day 11**

### **Sun Sep 10 – Day 12**

9:30pm Palau de la Musica – Opera Falmenco, History of Love – tickets in file  
Calle del Palau, 08003 Barcelona Tele +34 932 957 200



Opera y Flamenco tells the tormented love story of the dancers interpreted by their own souls, the soprano and the tenor. Sensual choreographies alternate with opera's most famous arias ("Casta Diva" Norma by V. Bellini, Carmen by G. Bizet, Tosca by Puccini, Camille Sanit-Saëns, R. Leoncavallo...) in a mixture of great artistic beauty between flamenco and outstanding lyric songs.

### **Mon Sep 11- Sonya**

American Airlines 6286 Operated by British Airways

Depart: BCN September 11, 2017 10:10 AM - Arrive: LHR September 11, 2017 11:35 AM

American Airlines 81

Depart: LHR September 11, 2017 12:50 PM - Arrive: DFW September 11, 2017 5:05 PM

### **Tue Sep 12**

8:30am Taxi arranged through apt manager – resulting in an awful story of no show and then lost luggage

10:50am Depart Barcelona BCN via UA#121 – 8:55 hrs

1:45pm Arrive Newark EWR

### **Tour Participants:**

Sonya Bland, Plano TX

Karen and Michael Brewer, Ellicott MD

Diana Burton, Middletown NJ

Mary and Robert (Bob) Glickman, New York NY

Frances (Fran) and Stanley (Stan) Goldman, Richmond VA

Joan Leitzer, Portland ME

Mary McCrea, Morro Bay CA

Sally and Donald (Don) Rieger, Simsbury CT

Kenneth (Ken) Spierer, Portland ME

Michael (Mike) Wolly, Rockville MD

Pol Roig Iniesta, Tour Guide, was born in Barcelona and first walked in the mountains with his father when he was just 3 years old, although it was not until 2009 when he realized his dream of becoming a mountain guide. He has travelled extensively in Scotland and Morocco, loves photography, mountain adventure sports like climbing, snowshoeing and canyoning, and grows his own organic food. He also enjoys cooking and has a tradition of preparing a tortilla, or Spanish omelette, whenever he returns home (in the Pyrenees) from a mountain trip.

Derek Zinger, Tour Guide, was originally from the U.S. He studied in England and Denmark before settling in Spain. Fluent in both Spanish and Catalan, Derek brings a unique view of the often unknown but fascinating traditions of this northeast region of Spain in his unique position as a bridge between Anglo and Catalan culture. Derek's varied background includes working as a graphic artist, teacher, and actor before becoming a guide. When not hiking the trails of the Costa Brava, Derek enjoys cinema, jazz music, Scandinavian architecture and design, and honing his skills as a classically trained singer.

### **Emergency State Department**

U.S. Consulate in Barcelona

Paseo Reina Elisenda (the neighborhood of Sarria)

+ (34) 93 280 2227, 08:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

+ (34) 91-587-2200 - after-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens

Note that we have registered with [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) and they have all our addresses and phones.

Email: [BarcelonaACS@state.gov](mailto:BarcelonaACS@state.gov)

**Emergency Assistance**

Emergency Assistance Plus Program – 24/7

United Mileage Plus member #0186014 (card in file and D's wallet)

Tele: 866 816 2073 or 60 328 1752 collect

ITINERARY CHANGES - Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL - Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

#### Tour Itinerary Overview

#### TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Midmost Barcelona (lobby), Barcelona, Spain, 9:00 a.m.

Carrer Pelai, 14

Barcelona, Spain

Tel 011 34 935 051 100

#### NIGHTS 1 & 2

Finca El Ventós

Sant Feliu de Pallerols, Spain

Tel 011 34 972 107 962

Email [hotel@elventos.com](mailto:hotel@elventos.com)

[fincaelventos.com](http://fincaelventos.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

#### NIGHT 3 & 4

Nord 1901 Hotel

Carrer Nord, 7-9

Girona, Spain

Tel 011 34 972 411 522

Email [info@nord1901.com](mailto:info@nord1901.com)

[nord1901.com](http://nord1901.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

#### NIGHTS 5 & 6

Hotel Playa Sol

Riba es Planc, 3

Cadaqués, Spain

Tel 011 34 972 258 100

Email [playasol@playasol.com](mailto:playasol@playasol.com)

[playasol.com](http://playasol.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME - Hotel Midmost Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, by 2:00 p.m.

EMERGENCY CONTACT - One Call International

Email [mail@oncallinternational.com](mailto:mail@oncallinternational.com)

If communicating from within the US - Text 603.945.0103 Tel 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the US - Tel 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

TRAVEL INSURANCE - We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

#### Tour Facts at a Glance

##### TOUR LENGTH

7 days, 6 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE - Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME - Hotel Midmost Barcelona (lobby), Barcelona, Spain, 9:00 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME - Hotel Midmost Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, 2:00 p.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL - This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures. It is rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 7 miles per day, with options on many days. There are few ascents and descents, with climbing time on the ascents ranging from about 15 to 30 minutes. The terrain varies from paved and cobblestone streets (during organized city tours and other easy village exploration) to uneven, single-track trails with loose stones or gravel, rocks, and roots. Some trails are exposed to the sun.

##### INCLUSIONS

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except one lunch and one dinner; local wine or beer included with dinners
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International

» The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN - Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES - Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.

##### Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the optional Flight + Tour Combo, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME - Hotel Midmost Barcelona (lobby), Barcelona, Spain, 9:00 a.m. Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for city walking.

MOST CONVENIENT ARRIVAL AIRPORT - Barcelona-El Prat Airport (BCN)  
[aerpuertobarcelona-elprat.com/ingl/](http://aerpuertobarcelona-elprat.com/ingl/)

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT - A taxi from the airport to the Hotel Midmost Barcelona costs approximately 35 euros. Travel time is approximately 30 minutes (depending upon time of day). You may also arrange a private transfer directly through the Hotel Midmost Barcelona. Please contact the hotel directly for assistance.

**PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS** - If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Hotel Midmost Barcelona in Barcelona, the meeting-point hotel, for the night prior to the tour. To make a reservation, please contact the hotel directly.

Hotel Midmost Barcelona

Carrer Pelai, 14

Barcelona, Spain

Tel 011 34 935 051 100 Email [info@hotelmidmost.com](mailto:info@hotelmidmost.com) [www.hotelmidmost.com](http://www.hotelmidmost.com)

Room rates vary according to season and room type.

**DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS** - If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

**TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME** - Hotel Midmost Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, 2:00 p.m.

**MOST CONVENIENT DEPARTURE AIRPORT** - Barcelona-El Prat Airport (BCN) is the most convenient airport for your departure (and may require a connection if traveling to the U.S.). A taxi from the Hotel Midmost Barcelona to Barcelona Airport takes approximately 40 minutes (depending upon traffic) and costs approximately 35 euros.

[aerpuertobarcelona-elprat.com/ing/](http://aerpuertobarcelona-elprat.com/ing/)

Depending on your destination, it may not be possible to depart Spain on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

Information & Policies

**GUARANTEED DEPARTURES** - Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour\*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

\*except in cases of force majeure

**RESERVATIONS** - Reservations for this tour may be made by calling 800.464.9255. We can confirm your reservation with a deposit of \$350 per person. Final tour cost is due 90 days prior to tour departure date. As arrangements are confirmed at least a year in advance, the price is subject to change.

**GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES** - Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

**CANCELLATION POLICY** - Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost\*. Please notify us in writing.

\*One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.