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# The Costa Brava and the Girona Pyrenees, a unique destination to live life to the full

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Press Kit 2023



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**Walking the Costa Brava's coastal paths, pedalling through the province of Girona on greenways, tasting D.O. Empordà wines, parachuting down over the bay of Roses, sampling local gourmet food in Michelin-starred restaurants, revelling at musical festivals, having a go at scuba diving or an introduction to astronomy... these are just a few of the truly authentic experiences that the Costa Brava offers visitors in search of memorable holidays.**

Situated between Barcelona and the French border, the province of Girona is promoted under the Costa Brava and Girona Pyrenees tourism brands. With its amazing wealth of attractions, the region is just waiting to be discovered and lived intensely. Visitors are drawn to this welcoming, tourist-friendly area and to the chance to experience Dalí's homeland, with its vital, inspirational setting, its traditional and innovative cuisine, its multicoloured patchwork of different landscapes and the idiosyncrasies of everyday life in its capital city, Girona.

The capital of the province is a medium-sized, well-communicated city, with an airport and high-speed railway station, halfway between the coast and the Pyrenees. **Girona is reputed for being one of the cities with the highest standard of living in Spain.** It is a popular city-break destination thanks to its cultural, sightseeing and shopping attractions, along with its good road and railway links. Its heritage is particularly well conserved, with an old town where numerous places of interest are to be found. It is well worth visiting the city in May to see the *Girona Flower Time* festival, and in autumn, to coincide with the city's patron saint festivities and the Temporada Alta performing arts

festival. The city is also a reputed sports tourism destination and has three teams in Spanish competitions: Girona FC, at the first division football league, and Bàsquet Girona and UNI Girona, at men and women's basketball league.

The Costa Brava is an all-year-round holiday destination known for towns like Lloret de Mar, Roses, L'Escala, Platja d'Aro and Cadaqués. It has suitable inclusive infrastructures, facilities, tourist products and services for visitors wishing to spend memorable holidays with their family, partner or friends. Whether fans of sports or outdoor activities, culture enthusiasts, business professionals, wellness devotees, foodies or cruise passengers, on the Costa Brava they will all find something to suit them among the wide choice of top-quality products and activities.

The Costa Brava also has a specific range of luxury, exclusive tourist products, which includes accommodation with the accent on small, family-run and boutique hotels, as well as transport and activity companies, luxury and bespoke specialist travel agencies, which provide exclusive programmes, personalised services and select experiences for visitors wishing to discover the region in a different way.



## Mediterranean light and landscape

In many people's minds the Costa Brava is identified by its **245 golden sandy beaches** and its coves and creeks surrounded by vegetation and rocky cliffs, stretching from Portbou to Blanes along 220 km of coastline. At present, 34 beaches and marinas fly the blue flag awarded by FEE (Foundation for Environmental Education).

Picturesque little seaside villages like Cadaqués, Calella de Palafrugell and Begur, and tourist resorts like Roses, L'Escala, Platja d'Aro, Tossa de Mar, Lloret de Mar and Blanes provide a multitude of options to welcome and delight any visitor attracted by the Mediterranean light and climate.

The destination also has eight seaside towns with the **Family Tourism Seal** (DTF), which specifically provide all the holiday products and services to cater for families' needs.

The Costa Brava's main **holiday towns** are Roses, Sant Pere Pescador, Torroella de Montgrí-L'Estartit, Calonge i Sant Antoni, Castell-Platja d'Aro, Sant Feliu de Guíxols, Lloret de Mar and Blanes.

## Travel to a land steeped in culture

With over **550 heritage sites** of outstanding interest listed in the province of Girona, the Costa Brava's range of cultural tourism options attracts millions of visitors seduced by the region's rich, intense historical and artistic heritage.

It is an area where Romanesque art once proliferated and where genuine heritage masterpieces still survive today, as is illustrated by the monasteries of Sant Pere de Rodes and Sant Pere de Galligants, or the castles of Begur and Montsoriu, all enduring witnesses of a golden period in Catalonia's history.

The **medieval villages** of Peralada, Pals, Peratallada, Madremanya and Monells are excellently conserved architectural ensembles that are valued for their interesting secular and religious sculptural features. These villages are also outstanding in terms of their rich craftsmanship heritage, as can be seen from the annual calendar of numerous themed events such as fairs, festivals and markets linked with their history.

Travellers should not miss the **Dalí Triangle**, formed by the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres, the Salvador Dalí House-Museum in Portlligat and the Gala Dalí Castle in Púbol, and which also includes special temporary exhibitions at its sites.

Culture on the Costa Brava, though, is not limited to Iberian, Greek and Roman remains, the legacy left by Salvador Dalí and the collections housed by about thirty museums on various subjects that make up the province of Girona's Museum Network. Culture also means the hundred festivals of different types that take place in the province – music, theatre, like the festival Temporada Alta, art, cinema, circus, magic –, local festivals declared of national interest, the network of memorial sites (Exile Memorial Museum and Walter Benjamin) or the special themed routes, including *indianos* architecture, literary, scientific and art nouveau themes, which have been created to present, explain and share the roots and history of this region and its people for the visitor's benefit.

A new activity which stands out is the Catalan 'Indians' Interpretation Centre in Begur, an immersive museum space about the legacy of the 'Indians' (Catalans who made their fortunes in Cuba before returning home) in Catalonia.

For the last seven years, the **Som Cultura festival** has been held throughout the province of Girona every November. The cultural experiences month has the intention of stimulating interest and encouraging both local inhabitants and visitors to attend cultural events in the autumn by programming genuine cultural proposals.





## A Michelin-starred region

The province of Girona's culinary wealth makes it a real pleasure to sit down in a restaurant and taste its surf and turf cuisine, with such treats as chicken cooked with langoustines, rabbit and clam rice dish, squid with meat stuffing, always washed down with excellent D.O. Empordà wines, of course.

The superb quality of the destination's cuisine is based on its locally-sourced ingredients, time-honoured recipes adapted to suit modern tastes and the expertise demonstrated by its chefs and the more than 2,000 restaurants serving different types of food, with the accent on Catalan, seasonal and signature cuisine. The diversity, wealth and quality of the region's produce is noteworthy, as are the numerous quality labels in use, such as the Girona Excel•lent certificate. This pride in local products is popularised through food fairs and festivals, which are often complemented by gourmet-themed campaigns, much to the delight of amateur cooks and food lovers alike.

The destination is renowned for its **thirteen Michelin-starred restaurants, which clock up eighteen stars altogether.** These include **the Roca brothers' El Celler de Can Roca in Girona, proclaimed the-best restaurant in the world in 2018.**

From June 2023, El Bulli 1846, a culinary research center and museum, will open in Cala Montjoi in Roses.

The province of Girona has always been renowned for its cuisine, and for the last few decades, for its wines as well. And the best way to discover the world of Empordà wine and the area where it is grown is to go on a wine tour of the Costa Brava, following the **D.O. Empordà Wine Route.** With an

area of 2,000 hectares of vineyards grouping together in 51 wineries, 31 of which offer wine tourism experiences, the destination enables visitors to immerse themselves in the universe of wine, *terroir*, tramontana wind and countryside.

To highlight the new Perelada Winery, by RCR Arquitectes, opened in May 2022, the first winery in Europe with LEED Gold sustainability certification.

Few places can rival the Empordà in producing varieties with such authentic, distinctive flavours and which are so worth discovering and tasting through wine tourism. Like every year, the **Vívid festival** will be taking place in April, making it the month for wine tourism experiences throughout the Costa Brava, celebrating its ninth edition this year.

Similarly, the last few years have seen an increase in the number of companies offering food and wine activities aimed essentially at connoisseurs wishing to sample and learn about Catalan and Mediterranean cuisine through show-cooking sessions, workshops and gastronomic tours.

### List of Michelin-starred restaurants:

El Celler de Can Roca \*\*\*  
 Miramar \*\*  
 Les Cols \*\*  
 Bo.TiC \*\*  
 Les Magnòlies \*  
 Ca l'Enric \*  
 Els Tinars \*  
 La Cuina de Can Simon \*  
 Fonda Xesc \*  
 Massana \*  
 Empòrium \*  
 Castell de Peralada \*  
 L'Aliança d'Anglès \*



## An oasis of nature

The protected natural areas are the most visible and accessible part for visitors of this living nature network situated in the province of Girona; a network that goes from the mountains to the sea, from dense forests to the Mediterranean coast, and which account for **31% of the destination's surface area**.

The province of Girona has eight natural parks, five of which are included under the Costa Brava tourism brand. They are, going from north to south, the Cap de Creus Natural Park, the first natural park with both land and sea reserves in Catalonia; the Albera Natural Area of National Interest, which is the massif forming the border between France and Spain, the Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park, an area of wetlands of international importance; the Natural Park of Montgrí, the Medes Islands and Baix Ter, which is the most recently created park and, finally, the Montseny Natural Park.

**The Cap de Creus Natural Park, the Natural Park of Montgrí, the Medes Islands and Baix Ter and the Montseny Natural Park are committed to the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST). The Montseny Natural Park is also the first site in the province to be declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.**

Further away from the coast, located in

the Pyrenees of Girona, there are three more natural parks of great scenic and ecological value: La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park, Natural Park of the Ter and Freser Headwaters, both distinguished with the CETS seal, and the Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park.

There are sustainable tourism activities in the protected areas to enable visitors to discover them in an active, environmentally-friendly way. The most usual ones being hiking and bicycle touring routes, water sports, wild animal and plant observation activities, and sociocultural events and activities.

**The Costa Brava is currently working towards being listed as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve**, an international recognition awarded by UNESCO to encourage the conservation of the landscape, ecosystems and sustainability. If the process is successfully completed, it will become the third destination in Catalonia to have this distinction, along with Montseny and Terres de l'Ebre.

Besides the natural areas, there are three botanical gardens and a Renaissance garden, which act as balconies over the Mediterranean and are ideal for visitors interested in botany, art and architecture.

## Activity, adventure and fun all year round

For more active and adventurous visitors, a good way to discover the Costa Brava is through **land-based sports** like hiking, on over 2,000 km of local footpaths, long-distance paths, the Itinerànnia routes and the highly popular **coastal paths**. Other options include road cycling, mountain biking or cycle touring, on the Pirinexus route, along greenways, or gently pedalling a *burricleta* electric bike through Girona's inland cities and villages. While on the subject of cycling, it is worth mentioning **the Sea Otter Europe Costa Brava Girona cycling festival**, held in the city of Girona in September every year. Other regular outdoor activities in the area include horse riding, climbing and golf. The latter can be played at any of the province's eight golf courses, including the **Camiral Golf and Wellness, ranked the best golf resort in Spain** by the prestigious website Top100golfcourses.com.

As far as **water sports** are concerned, the Costa Brava's coastline boasts eighteen leisure harbours and marinas, enabling pleasure boats to moor on Girona's coast. Seaside towns like Roses, Sant Pere Pescador, L'Escala, L'Estartit, Palamós, Platja d'Aro, Lloret de Mar and Blanes offer a wide range of boating and water sports and activities, including sailing, catamaran sailing, windsurfing of all types, kayaking, scuba diving and snorkelling, enabling visitors to explore the destination's unique character from the sea. Dives at more than 60 diving spots catering for all levels, organised by the 34 diving centres operating between Blanes and Portbou, constitute a major attraction for those wishing to explore the Costa Brava from another dimension. Additionally, **the bay of Roses hosts one of the World Windsurfing Championship events** every year in June.



## A genuine region where ideas flow

**Air-born activities** include parachuting at **Skydive Empuriabrava, one of the three top parachuting centres in the world**, or hot-air balloon rides, with breathtaking views of the plain of the Empordà from the sky first thing in the morning. Finally, there is also the chance to experience the sensation of skydiving in a safe environment in the wind tunnel, also located in Empuriabrava.

The quality of the tourist offer and the excellent sports facilities of the territory, added to its climatic and natural characteristics, make the province of Girona an ideal destination for the practice of different sports both indoor and outdoor.

In terms of both amateur and professional sports, the Costa Brava has **Sports Tourism specialized destinations** listed by the Catalan Tourist Board: —Banyoles, Roses, Castelló d'Empúries- Empuriabrava, L'Escala, Girona, Palamós, Castell-Platja d'Aro, Lloret de Mar and Blanes—. These destinations promote such diverse sports as road cycling, mountain biking, triathlon, athletics, soccer, swimming, tennis, rowing and canoeing. **The province also has a long list of elite sportsmen and women that live and train regularly in the area, and has superb sports facilities**, service companies, specialised accommodation and incoming agencies for planning international sports events.

A far cry from the overcrowded big cities and just an hour from Barcelona, the **Costa Brava-Girona has established itself as one of the most attractive business, convention and incentive trip destinations as an alternative to large European cities.**

The numerous state-of-the-art, multipurpose congress centres are equipped to cater for all sorts of events and are generally situated in central locations, within easy reach of accommodation and leisure areas. They can host any number of events ranging from scientific and business meetings to all sorts of medical congresses, trade conventions and product presentations and can be found in various towns, like Girona, Lloret de Mar, Roses, Olot, Torroella de Montgrí, Sant Feliu de Guíxols, Palamós and Platja d'Aro.

In a similar vein, the Costa Brava also offers a myriad of unique, exclusive venues for holding professional events and meetings in natural and historical settings, including castles, monasteries, museums, gardens, beaches, country houses and wineries. Going beyond work, with the aim of fostering team spirit, the destination provides companies with a wide variety of authentic experiences to complement conventions, work sessions, training courses and product presentations.

The various options range from outdoor leisure and adrenalin-packed activities in beautiful natural surroundings to cookery courses and workshops, astronomy sessions and themed cultural visits.





## Wellness balms

For many visitors a trip to the Costa Brava means a chance to have fun and get involved in sports and adventure activities, but also to take a break and enjoy a relaxing holiday, to regain their energy and recover the sensation of serenity and harmony so as to make a fresh start.

To offset the relentless rhythm of everyday life, the province of Girona offers a whole range of options to help visitors find time and enjoy their surroundings while they discover **new activities that combine pleasure with therapy**, like mindfulness, woodland immersion, yoga, chi kung, dance therapy, thermal treatments and circuits, without forgetting

gourmet healthy cuisine experiences, contemplative cultural visits and sports activities.

These activities take place **at hotels with a spa, at modernised 19th-century thermal baths, at innovative health and relaxation centres**, or at premises specialising in retreats and wellness activities. Getting away from it all with a wellness break is a great way to unwind and get back into shape.

This year **Som Benestar** festival will be celebrating its first edition.

## Universal accessibility

The Costa Brava provides a wide variety of inclusive cultural, sporting and outdoor activities. These range from guided visits in sign language, tactile tables and panels in Braille at monuments and museums to outdoor activities adapted for people with functional diversity to have a go at scuba diving, cycle touring, kayaking, paragliding or hot-air ballooning. There are also hotels with accessible accommodation.

Finally, the province of Girona offers **a great variety of accommodation options** to enable visitors to enjoy every minute of their stay in the Costa Brava and the Girona Pyrenees. There are all kinds of hotels, holiday apartments, campsites and holiday villages, as well as country accommodation and hostels, with a capacity for some 265,000 visitors altogether.

By all accounts, the Costa Brava has an amazing range of options to offer visitors to the region attracted by its climate, nature, culture, fine cuisine, leisure activities and its inhabitants' hospitality.





**A world in which mountain peaks lie close to the Mediterranean Sea. Where snow and sand are within easy reach of one another. Where volcanoes share spaces with beaches, coves and cliffs; and coastal paths, with ski slopes. Where culture rubs shoulders with adventure sports and gastronomy blends together with history. A world where you can be transported back to the tenth century and still be back in time to dine in the finest restaurants. From the captivating Romanesque to signature cuisine in a matter of minutes. From the regions of Cerdanya to Garrotxa, passing through Ripollès, until you reach the Mediterranean.**

Forest bathing or relaxing spa? Wines or cheeses? Hiking or cycling? Valleys or caves? Kayaking or snowboarding? A thousand ways of doing things and of being; a thousand identities and traditions rooted in this land of greens, blues, ochres and white. A world filled with many other worlds, bursting with landscapes, towns and villages and diverse people. A land of rivers, ponds and lakes; of small rural churches dotted across landscapes crowned by peaks reaching almost 3000 metres; of mountain ranges with incredible beauty spots; of wetlands full of life; of dormant volcanoes covered with forests and natural parks that transmit unique sensations.





The Girona Pyrenees are as **diverse** as their landscapes. **Mediterranean** and **sustainable Pyrenees** that offer visitors a series of **natural, gastronomic** and **cultural wonders** where a multitude of activities can be enjoyed **all year round**.

How about a morning hike in the mountain followed by river kayaking in the afternoon, then a delicious 'sea and mountain' dinner to round the day off? The next day can be spent at the beach. Nurturing body and soul in protected natural areas or at historical cultural events is possible in the Girona Pyrenees.

The Girona Pyrenees are another world because their **unique combination of high mountain and proximity to the sea** bestows them with **a regional diversity of customs and traditions, gastronomy, landscapes and activities** difficult to find in any other place.

They are another world because the region is home to **three natural areas** as different from one another as the **Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park**, the **Headwaters of the Rivers Ter and Freser Natural Park** and the **Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park**. A region that boasts **25 peaks of more than 2500 metres altitude**, from the highest peak in Cerdanya at Puigpedrós (2914 metres), all the way to the sea and another natural park at Cap de Creus.

The Girona Pyrenees are committed to the environment and to **responsible**

**tourism**. Two of the region's natural parks have been certified by the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. Moreover, the region offers **local experiences that promote harmony between body and nature**, such as forest bathing and numerous outdoor wellness activities, while caring for the environment and surroundings. Visitors can also choose from **countless ideas for actively enjoying the local flora and fauna**, learning to appreciate them and contributing towards their maintenance and preservation.

Of particular note is the Espai Cràter in Olot, the new center for research, education and information about volcanoes in the Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park, which opened in March 2022.

In winter, the snow takes centre stage. **Five ski resorts** make the Girona Pyrenees the best place to come for this sport, with thrilling runs down the **more than 200 km of slopes** at Masella, La Molina, Vall de Núria and Vallter 2000, as well as cross-country skiing trails at Guils Fontanera. Take your pick: alpine skiing at **La Molina**, the oldest ski resort in the Pyrenees and home of world championships, or night skiing under the stars at **Masella**; these two resorts form **Alp 2500**, one of the Pyrenees largest skiable areas. And for those skiing as a family, there are the resorts of Vall de Núria and Vallter 2000, which organise guided snow shoe excursions during the day and at night.





The Girona Pyrenees are also **active during the rest of the year: greenways** as a family, **cycle-tourism routes**, **hiking** trails along the numerous GR long-distance footpaths and other marked trails, observing the **flora and fauna** with the knowledge of local guides, **kayaking** and a thousand other adventures for all tastes (hot-air ballooning, parachuting, canyoning...), in addition to all the mountain activities, from climbing to mountain bike routes.

The Girona Pyrenees have managed to preserve some of the country's most important **cultural heritage**, while also maintaining their own unique character. Thus, we find **Roman remains** in Bolvir and vestiges of ancient **Jewish settlements in Besalú**, as well as the **Romanesque legacy of counts and abbots** in towns such as Sant Joan de les Abadesses and Ripoll and in a multitude of charming villages such as Santa Pau and Beget.

And all **this historical and regional variety has filtered down into a culinary tradition of exceptional quality**, cooked up among volcanoes, green valleys and mountain ranges, with some **'sea and mountain' recipes that sum up the region's unique spirit**.

In the Girona Pyrenees, the **excellent produce**, cultivated and made while **respecting the environment and offering maximum taste and olfactory quality**, are fundamental for supplying restaurant kitchens and wineries: cheeses from Garrotxa and Cerdanya, wines and oils from the Albera area and Llívia, lamb and beef from Ripollès, volcanic cuisine, traditional mountain dishes... Local products lovingly grown and made by families who have been doing so for decades. Cuisine from the sea and mountain, volcanic cuisine, cuisine from the Alt Empordà area and from the Pyrenees, all in the same destination.

All of this is complemented by an attractive range of high-quality local services and accommodation eager to offer visitors a warm welcome. Establishments committed to the values of sustainability, inclusion and accessibility for the love of the land.

In the Girona Pyrenees, another world is possible and you can discover it.

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