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Exploring Barcelona

By TONY ROBINSON

Editor Tony Robinson describes places to shop, skate and chill near museums in the capital of Catalonia.

What to do: Explore the hidden pedestrian alleys and side streets of the Born neighborhood, near the Museu Picasso. Take a short walk from the museum down Carrer dels Flassaders—which has boutiques, housewares stores and the Hofmann pastisseries—toward Passeig del Born. Almost any side street to Flassaders offers a hidden gem. On Carrer de la Cirera is the Mama Quilla boutique, which offers reasonably priced, fair-trade clothing and accessories, much of which is made by the proprietor or local artisans. Like many shops outside the big tourist areas, the store closes for siesta; it operates Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. (mamaquillaben.wordpress.com, 634-755-897). Walk down the block-long Passeig del Born and drop in at the Esglesia de Santa Maria del Mar. This 14th-century Gothic church, which has a particularly wide sanctuary, isn't as spectacular as Antoni Gaudi's better-known Temple Expiatori Sagrada Familia. But unlike that still-unfinished church, Santa Maria is complete and you can walk right in. At Montjuic in the city's south, stroll through the Jardins Laribal to escape the heat and the crowds of the Fundacio Joan Miro. Benches and a canopy of Mediterranean trees line stone walkways that zigzag down the mountain. Quiet fountains with shallow trenches that cross the walkways were inspired by Moorish gardens of southern Spain. Jardins Laribal lead behind the Miro museum, a good spot for a picnic (www.bcn.es/aparcat/en/aparcat_laribal.htm). For skaters, there's a skate park, benches to grind and masonry banks to ride at the triangular, modern Edifici Forum (www.barcelonaturisme.com/Edifici-Forum). Take the metro to the El Maresme/Forum stop, walk southeast along Rambla de Prim toward the sea and turn left at the plaza in front of the convention center.

Where to eat: At Passeig del Born, try the reasonably priced Origenes, at No. 4, or around the corner, at No. 6-8, Carrer de la Vidrieria. The portions, meant for sharing, are more complex, adventurous and a little bigger than your average tapas. The menu has detailed descriptions of the dishes, though the translations can be challenging. Try the stuffed apple of l'Emporda, filled with veal, pork, cinnamon and egg. A family of four can eat well, with wine for two and dessert, for less than \$100 (www.lallavordelorigens.com; 34-93-295-66-90). Or consider Set de Born, a more traditional tapas bar with a *xarcuteria* of cold meats available to take out. It's about a block south of Passeig del Born at No. 7 Carrer de l'Esparteria (34-93-319-35-31). For a slightly more formal, expensive meal, take about a 10-minute walk from Passeig del Born to Suquet de l'Amirall at No. 65 Passeig de Joan de Borbo, in the Barceloneta neighborhood by the marina. The elegant-yet-understated restaurant specializes in *suquet*, a fish stew (34-93-221-62-33).

Where to stay: If you're staying at least three nights, trying renting one of 100 apartments available around the city from Habitat Apartments. They come fully furnished and many have broadband. Prices start at \$125 a night, double occupancy; add about \$15 per child (www.habitatapartments.com). About a block from the Museu Picasso is Ciutat Barcelona, a 78-room modern hotel in an old building, with a tiny rooftop pool. Rooms start about \$180 a night, double occupancy (www.ciutatbarcelona.com).

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