

THE HISTORY OF CATALONIA

The Catalans have always been great seafarers, merchants and industrialists. Since they were united under the House of Barcelona, their nationhood has been threatened by marriages, alliances and conflicts with Madrid, and the road to their present status as a semi-autonomous region within Spain has been marked by times of power and wealth and troughs of weakness and despair.

Barcelona was not a natural site for human settlement. Its port was negligible and its heights, Montjuïc, had no water. The oldest evidence of man in Catalonia comes rather from other sites scattered across the region, notably the dolmens of the Alt (high) Empordà and passage graves of the Baix (low) Empordà and Alt Urgell.

In the first millennium BC the lands around Barcelona were settled by the agrarian Laeitani, while other parts of Catalonia were simultaneously colonized by the Iberians. The latter were great builders in stone and remains of one of their settlements are still visible at Ullastret on the Costa Brava. Greek traders arrived on the coast around 550 BC, founding their first trading post at Empúries (Emporion, *see p102*) near Ullastret. It was the Carthaginians from New Carthage in southern Spain who put Barcelona on the map. They named the city after Hamil Barca, father of Hannibal who led his army of elephants from Catalonia over the Pyrenees and Alps to attack Rome.




Roman mosaic floor excavated in Barcelona depicting the Three Graces

In reprisal, the Romans arrived at Empúries and began the subjugation of the whole Iberian peninsula. They wiped out the Carthaginians as well as the Laeitani and established Tarraco (Tarragona, *see p110*) in the south of Catalonia as the imperial capital of Tarraconensis, one of the three administrative regions of the peninsula.

Roman Barcelona can be seen in the city gate beside the cathedral, while the 3rd-century walls that once encircled the town lie by the medieval Royal Palace (*see p54*). Foundations of the Roman city have been excavated in the basement of the Museu d'Història de la Ciutat (*see p55*), and pillars from the Temple of Augustus can be glimpsed inside the Centre Excursionista de Catalunya (*see p53*) behind the cathedral.

When the Roman empire collapsed, Visigoths based in Toulouse moved in to fill the vacuum. They had been vassals of Rome, practised Roman law, spoke a similar language and in 587 their Aryan king, Reccared, converted to the Christianity of Rome.

TIMELINE

500–200 BC Fortified Iberian settlements at Ullastret. Cyclopean walls of Tarragona		550 BC Greeks establish trading settlement at Empúries	
1000–500 BC Indo-Europeans invade Ter and Llobregat valleys; Iberians settle Montjuïc		Visigothic Cross	
2500 BC	1500 BC	500 BC	AD 500
2000–1500 BC Megalithic monuments built throughout Catalonia		230 BC Barcelona founded by Hamil Barca, father of Hannibal	218 BC Romans arrive at Empúries to subjugate Spain
Hannibal			AD 531 Visigoths established in Barcelona after fall of Rome
			AD 258 Barcelona city walls built after a Frankish invasion

THE MOORS AND CHARLEMAGNE

The Visigoths established their capital at Toledo, just south of modern Madrid. When King Wirtzia died in 710, his son, Akhila, is said to have called on the Saracens from north Africa for help in claiming the throne. In 711, with astonishing speed, Muslim and Berber tribes began to drive up through the Iberian peninsula, reaching Barcelona in



Page from a 15th-century manuscript of the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar*

717, then Poitiers in France in 732, where they were finally stopped by the Frankish leader, Charles Martel.

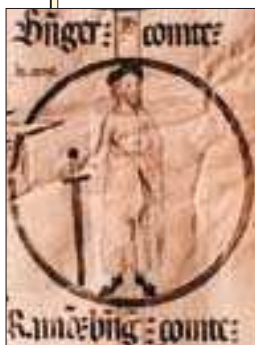
The Muslims made their capital in Córdoba in southern Spain, while the Visigothic nobles found hiding places

in the Pyrenees, from which they conducted sorties against the invaders. They were aided by Charles Martel's grandson, Charles the Great (Charlemagne).

In 801 Barcelona was retaken by the Franks, only to be lost and taken again. The shortness of the Muslim occupation left Catalonia, unlike the rest of Spain, unmarked by the culture and language of Islam.

most powerful figure in the east was Guifré el Pelós (Wilfred the Hairy), who consolidated the counties of Barcelona, Cerdanya, Conflent, Osona Urgell and Girona and founded the monastery of Ripoll (see p96) – *el bressol de Catalunya* (the cradle of Catalonia). Guifré died in battle against the Moors in 897, but he had started a dynasty of Counts of Barcelona which was to last, unbroken, for 500 years.

Before the end of the 11th century, under Ramon Berenguer I, Catalonia had established the first constitutional government in Europe with a bill of rights, the *Usatges*. By the early 12th century, under Ramon Berenguer III, Catalonia's boundaries had pushed south past Tarragona. Catalan influence also spread north and east when he married Dolça of Provence, linking the two regions and, more lastingly, the principality of Barcelona was united with its neighbour Aragon in 1137 by the marriage of Ramon Berenguer IV and Petronila of Aragon. In 1196 the great monastery of Poblet (see pp108–9) in Tarragona province took the place of Ripoll as the pantheon of Catalan royalty.



Ramon Berenguer I of Barcelona (1035–76)

THE COUNTS OF BARCELONA

Charlemagne created the Hispanic Marc, a buffer state along the Pyrenees, which he entrusted to local lords. The

TIMELINE

	<p>717 Catalonia occupied by Muslims</p>	<p>801 Moors ejected. Charlemagne sets up buffer state</p>	<p>1060 Constitution, <i>Usatges</i>, is drawn up around the time that the word Catalan is first recorded</p>
<p>AD 700</p>		<p>800</p>	<p>900</p>
<p>711 North African Muslims invade Spanish mainland</p>	<p><i>Moorish sword</i></p>	<p>778 Charlemagne, leader of the Franks, begins campaign to drive Moors from Spain</p>	<p>878 Guifré el Pelós (Wilfred the Hairy), Count of Cerdanya-Urgell, consolidates eastern Pyrenees and gains virtual autonomy. He starts 500-year dynasty of Counts of Barcelona</p>
<p><i>Charlemagne (742–814)</i></p>		<p>1000</p>	<p>1008–46 Abbot Oliva builds church at Ripoll and oversees Benedictine building including Vic and Monserrat</p>

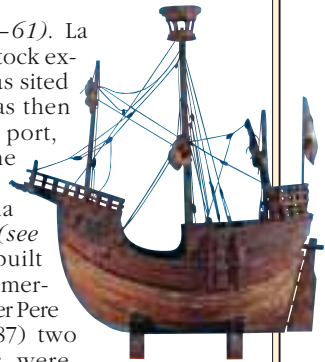
MARITIME EXPANSION

Under Jaume I the Conqueror (1213–76), Catalonia began a period of prosperity and expansion. By the end of the 13th century the Balearic islands and Sicily had been conquered; many of the ships used in the enterprise were built at the vast Drassanes shipyards in Barcelona (see p65). Catalonia now ruled the seas and the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar* was a code of trading practice that held sway throughout the Mediterranean. Swashbuckling admirals included Roger de Llúria, who won a definitive victory over the French fleet in the Bay of Roses in 1285, and Roger de Flor, leader of a bunch of fierce Catalan and Aragonese mercenaries, the Almogàvers. These won battles for both the King of Sicily and the Byzantine emperor before Roger de Flor was murdered in 1305.

During Jaume I's long reign the *Corts* (parliament) was established, the city walls were rebuilt to enclose an area ten times larger than that enclosed by the old Roman walls, and noble houses arose down the new Carrer Montcada

(see pp 60–61). La Llotja (the stock exchange) was sited by what was then the main port, and the church of Santa Maria del Mar (see p60) was built by grateful merchants. Under Pere IV (1336–87) two great halls were built: the Royal Palace's Saló del Tinell and the Casa de la Ciutat's Saló de Cent (see pp 54–5).

Prosperity brought a flowering of Catalan literature. Jaume I wrote his own *Llibre dels Feits* (*Book of Deeds*), and Pere el Gran's conquest of Sicily in 1282 was described in glowing terms in a chronicle of Catalan history written by Bernat Desclot around 1285. The great Catalan poet Ramon Lull (1232–1315), born in Mallorca, was the first




Ex voto in the form of a 15th-century ship

to use a vernacular language in religious writing. From 1395 an annual poetry competition, the Jocs Florals, was held in the city, attracting the region's troubadours. In 1450, Joanot Martorell began writing his Catalan chivalric epic narrative *Tirant lo Blanc*, though he died in 1468, 22 years before it was published. Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quijote*, described it as simply "the best book in the world".



Wall painting showing Jaume I during his campaign to conquer Mallorca

1137 Barcelona united to neighbouring Aragon by royal marriage	1258–72 <i>Consolat de Mar</i> , a code of trading practice, holds sway throughout the Mediterranean	1282 Pere el Gran takes Sicily. His exploits are recorded in Desclot's <i>Chronicles</i>	1347–8 Black death kills a quarter of the population
1100 1148 Frontier with Moors pushed back to Riu Ebre	1213–35 Jaume I (The Conqueror) takes Mallorca, Ibiza and Formentera	1300	1400
Jaume I (1213–76)			1324 Sardinia captured 1302–5 Catalan mercenaries under Admiral Roger de Flor aid Byzantium against the Turks
1287 Conquest of Mallorca under Alfons III			

FERNANDO AND ISABEL OF CASTILE

Catholic Spain was united in 1479 when Fernando II of Catalonia-Aragon married Isabel of Castile, a region which



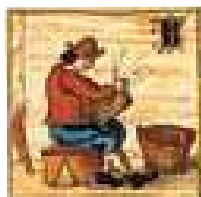
Baptizing Jews during the era of the Catholic Monarchs

by then had absorbed the rest of northern Spain. In 1492 they drove the last of the Moors from the peninsula, then, in a fever of righteousness, also drove out the Jews, who

had large and commercially important populations in Barcelona (see p54) and Girona. This was the same year that Columbus had set foot in America, returning in triumph to Barcelona with six Carib Indians (see p56). However, the city lost out when the monopoly on New World trade was given to Seville and Cádiz. Though it still had great moments, such as its involvement in the victory over the Turks at Lepanto in 1571 (see p65), Barcelona went into a period of decline.

REVOLTS AND SIEGES

During the Thirty Years War with France (1618–59), Felipe IV forced Barcelona's *Corts* to raise an army to fight the French, towards whom the Catalans bore no grudge. A viceroy was imposed on the city and unruly Spanish troops were billeted throughout the region. In June 1640 the population arose, and harvesters (*segadors*) murdered the viceroy. The *Song of the Harvesters* is still sung at Catalan gatherings (see p32). Barcelona then allied itself with France, but was besieged and defeated by Felipe. The peace of 1659 ceded Catalan lands north of the Pyrenees to France.



Wall tile for a Catalan trade guild

A second confrontation with Madrid arose during the War of the Spanish Succession when Europe's two dominant royal houses, the Habsburgs and Bourbons, both laid claim to the throne. Barcelona, with England as an ally, found itself on the losing side, supporting the Habsburgs. As a result, it was heavily



The great siege of Barcelona in 1714 during the War of the Spanish Succession

TIMELINE

<p>1492 Columbus discovers Americas. Barcelona barred from trade with the New World. Jews expelled</p>	<p>1494 Supreme Council of Aragon brings Catalonia under Castilian control</p>	<p><i>The Spanish Inquisition, active from 1478</i></p>	<p>1619 Spanish capital established in Madrid</p>	<p>1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees at end of Thirty Years War draws new border with France; Roussillon ceded to France</p>
<p>AD 1450</p>	<p>AD 1500</p>		<p>AD 1550</p>	<p>AD 1600</p>
<p>1479 Fernando II of Catalonia-Aragon marries Isabel of Castile, uniting all the houses of Spain</p>	<p>1490 <i>Tirant lo Blanc</i>, epic tale of chivalry by Martorell (see p39), published in Catalan</p>	<p>1571 Vast fleet sets sail from Barcelona to defeat the Ottomans at sea at Lepanto</p>	<p>1640 Revolt of the harvesters (<i>segadors</i>) against Spanish exploitation of Catalan resources during Thirty Years War with France</p>	



Women joining in the defence of Girona against the Napoleonic French in 1809

besieged by troops of the incoming Bourbon king, Felipe V. The city fell on 11 September 1714, today celebrated as National Day (see p32). Felipe then proceeded to annul all of Catalonia's privileges. Its language was banned, its universities closed and Lleida's Gothic cathedral became a barracks. Felipe tore down the Ribera district of Barcelona and, in what is now Ciutadella Park (see p62), built a citadel to keep an eye on the population.

With the lifting of trade restrictions with the Americas, Catalonia began to recover economically. Progress, however, was interrupted by the 1793–95 war with France and then by the 1808–14 Peninsular War (known in Spain as the War of Independence) when Napoleon put his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. Barcelona fell in early 1808, but Girona withstood a seven-month siege. Monasteries, including Montserrat

(see pp104–5) were sacked and pillaged. They suffered further in 1835 under a republican government when many were seen as too rich and powerful and were dissolved. This was a politically vigorous time, when a minority of largely rural reactionaries fought a rearguard action against the liberal spirit of the century in the Carlist Wars.

THE CATALAN RENAISSANCE

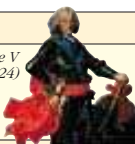
Barcelona was the first city in Spain to industrialize, mainly around cotton manufacture, from imported raw material from the Americas. It brought immigrant workers and a burgeoning population, and in 1854 the city burst out of its medieval walls (see p67). Inland, industrial centres such as Terrassa and Sabadell flourished and *colònies industrials* (industrial workhouses) grew up along the rivers where mills were powered by water.

Just as the wealth of the 14th century inspired Catalonia's first flowering, so the wealth from industry inspired the *Renaixença*, a renaissance of Catalan culture. Its literary rallying points were Bonaventura Aribau's *Oda a la patria* and the poems of a young monk, Jacint Verdaguer, who won poetry prizes in the revived Jocs Florals (see p39).



Well-to-do *barcelonins* selecting from a wide range of locally produced calico in the early 19th century

Felipe V (1700–24)



1808–14 Peninsular War (War of Independence): Girona besieged, Barcelona occupied, Monastery of Montserrat sacked

1823–6 French occupy Catalonia

1835 Monasteries dissolved

1833–9 First Carlist War

1859 Revival of Jocs Florals poetry competition feeds Renaissance of Catalan culture.

AD 1700

AD 1750

AD 1800

AD 1850

1714 Barcelona sacked by Felipe V, first Bourbon king. Catalan universities closed. Catalan language banned

1778 Catalonia allowed to trade with the Americas, bringing new wealth



1833 Aribau's *Oda a la patria* published

Poet Bonaventura Carles Aribau i Farriols

1849 Spain's first railway built to link Barcelona and Mataró



A hall of Spanish goods at the 1888 Universal Exhibition

CATALANISM AND MODERNISME

The *Renaixença* produced a new pride in Catalonia, and “Catalanism” was at the heart of the region’s accelerating move towards autonomy, a move echoed in Galicia and the Basque Country. Interruptions by the Carlist Wars came to an end in 1876 and resulted in the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy.

The first home-rule party, the *Lliga de Catalunya*, was founded in 1887, and disputes with the central government continued. It was blamed for the loss of the American colonies, and therefore lucrative transatlantic trade, and for involving Spain in unnecessary conflict in Morocco. *La setmana tràgica* (tragic week) of 1909 saw the worst of the violent protests: 116 people died and 300 were injured.

Meanwhile, on a more cultural and artistic level and to show off its increasing wealth, Barcelona held in 1888 a

Universal Exhibition in the Parc de la Ciutadella where Felipe V’s citadel had recently been torn down. The urban expansion (*eixample*) inland was carefully ordered under a plan by Ildefons Cerdà (*see p67*) and industrial barons employed imaginative architects to show off their wealth, most successfully Eusebi Güell and Antoni Gaudí (*see pp22–3*). The destruction of the monasteries had left spaces for sumptuous buildings such as

the Palau de la Música Catalana (*see p61*), the Liceu opera house and La Boqueria market (*see p135*).

Spain’s non-involvement in World War I meant that Catalonia’s Modernista architecture was unscathed. Barcelona’s place as a showcase city was confirmed with the 1929 International



Antoni Gaudí, Modernisme’s most creative architect

Exhibition on Montjuïc, many of whose buildings still remain.

CIVIL WAR

The *Mancomunitat*, a local council established in 1914, disappeared on the arrival in 1923 of the dictator Primo de Rivera, Barcelona’s military governor. In 1931 Francesc Macià declared himself President of the Catalan Republic, which lasted three days. Three years later Lluís Companys was arrested and sentenced to 30 years’ imprisonment for attempting to do the same.



Poster for 1929 Exhibition

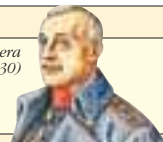
TIMELINE

1872–6 Third and last Carlist War

1888 Universal Exhibition held in Parc de la Ciutadella, showing off the new Modernista style

Primo de Rivera (1870–1930)

1909 *Setmana tràgica*: violent protest against Moroccan Wars



AD 1875

AD 1900

AD 1925



1893 Anarchist bombs in Liceu opera house kill 14
Carlist soldiers

1901 *Lliga Regionalista*, new Catalan party, wins elections

1929 International Exhibition on Montjuïc

1931 Francesc Macià declares independence for Catalonia



Refugees on the march in 1939, fleeing towards the Pyrenees to seek asylum in France

Finally, on 16 July 1936, General Francisco Franco led an army revolt against the Republican government and the fledgling autonomous states. The government fled Madrid to Valencia, then Barcelona. City and coast were bombed by German aircraft, and shelled by Italian warships. When Barcelona fell three years later, thousands escaped to camps in France and thousands, including Companys, were executed in Franco's reprisals. Catalonia lost all it had gained, and its language was outlawed once more.

The *noche negra*, the dark night that followed Franco's victory, left Barcelona short of resources and largely neglected by Madrid. The 1960s, however, brought new economic opportunities, and between 1960 and 1975 two million Spaniards came to work in the city. The arrival of the first tourists to the coast during that time, to the Costa Brava and Costa Daurada, changed the face of Spain for ever.

LIFE AFTER FRANCO

Champagne flowed freely in Barcelona's streets on the news of Franco's death in 1975. Democracy

and the monarchy, under the Bourbon Juan Carlos, were restored and Jordi Pujol of the conservative *Convergència i Unió* party was elected leader of the Generalitat, Catalonia's regional government. Catalonia has since won a large degree of autonomy, including tax-raising powers.

Pasqual Maragall, Barcelona's mayor until 1997 and the current president of Catalonia, steered through the radical shake-up of the city for the 1992 Olympic Games. In less than a decade Barcelona changed dramatically, with a bold new waterfront, inspired urban spaces, new access roads, and state-of-the-art museums and galleries.



Opening ceremony, 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games

1939 50,000 go into exile in France. Catalan President Companys executed

1947 Spain declared a monarchy with Franco as regent

AD 1950

1953 US bases welcomed

1936–9 Spanish Civil War. Republican government retreats from Madrid to Valencia, then Barcelona

1960s Costa Brava leads package holiday boom

1975 Franco dies. King Juan Carlos restores Bourbon line

1979 Partial autonomy granted to Catalonia

AD 1975

1985 Medes Islands become Spain's first marine nature reserve

1986 Spain enters European Union

1992 Olympic Games held in Barcelona

AD 2000



Cobi, the Olympic mascot