

# THE WALKING PARTY

## A TASTE OF CATALUNYA

Price: 2890 euros per person Single supplement: 360 euros

Distance: 67km approx.

Walking: moderate.



This is a more recent itinerary set up to counter balance our week in the Basque country. The week incorporates Barcelona one of the great cities of Europe and a constant source of inspirational ideas. You will visit master works of the Catalan architect, Anton Gaudi.

The Costa Brava is a beautiful rugged part of the world seemingly in eternal sunshine with wonderful food and wine and Sitges and Cadaques, two of the prettiest ports, the Porto San Stefano and Porto Fino of Catalunya!

You stay in coastal hotels (three four star hotels and one three star ... though heaven knows why this is rated a three star .. it is fabulous!). Dali's charming house and a boat trip round the cape are finishing touches before we end overlooking the beauty of Collioure with a Michelin star restaurant.

### Day 1 Saturday

You arrive at Barcelona airport in the afternoon to be met by James. We drive to a charming hotel in the heart of the old part of Sitges. The Sitges Hotel Royal has a lovely nineteenth century feel to it and we like it more than the modern hotels on the sea front. It is a stone's throw from the front and has seven lovely bedrooms all with bathrooms en suite. We will wander into the old town in the evening and have a *tapas* dinner in the old port amidst the usual Spanish hustle and bustle.

### Day 2 Sunday

We drive to a small village to start our mornings walk in the hills behind Sitges. This is a lovely hilly park full of wild fennel, rosemary and thyme and almond blossom with lovely views out over the Mediterranean. We walk through the park to have a picnic laden with fresh Spanish produce with Diana before continuing towards Sitges. We continue in the afternoon our descent towards Sitges. Vehicle pick up to take us back to the hotel. Dinner again in Sitges this time at a celebrated local restaurant in the old port again. *Walk: 11km*

### Day 3 Monday

After another lovely breakfast on the front we drive towards the sacred mountain of Catalunya: Montserrat. Here we take a beautiful walk into the Cava region. This is the champagne region of Catalunya and is now producing some extraordinary champagne style wines of stunning vitality. Gone are the days of over-acidic cheap fizz. There is big investment going on here and we will look in particular at the extraordinary vineyard of Pere Ventura. A delicious picnic lunch by a small chapel before we inspect the underground caverns. We then drive into Barcelona but stopping to see the extra-ordinary work of Gaudi at the Colonia Guell. This is my very favourite work of all! After viewing we shall drive into Barcelona and stay in a lovely hotel with far reaching views over the city and a roof swimming pool! Dinner Barcelona.. *Walk: 12km*

### Day 4 Tuesday

After breakfast we set off on foot for the famous Sagrada Familia cathedral designed again by the celebrated Catalan architect Gaudi, and which is still being constructed today. An astoundingly beautiful masterpiece mass of art nouveau and fantastic animal forms. One of the most extraordinary buildings of Europe and an absolute must to see. Lunch in the centre of the city before visiting the wonderful Casa Batllo and the extraordinary Palau Guell (if there is time). Both these houses were built by Gaudi for rich industrialists and are brilliant examples of his meticulous and stunning work. For those less interested in Gaudi there is an excellent moment for shopping! Dinner Barcelona. *Walk: 9km*



### Day 5 Wednesday

After breakfast we drive to Cadaques. We visit the house of Salvador Dali. A beautiful complex of a few fishermen's cottages that Dali slowly accumulated with time. Surprisingly prettily decorated and not nearly as surreally bizarre as I thought it might be! It is very beautiful indeed with more subtle quirks of surrealism than the shocking Dali delirium. One feels this is his wife Gala's influence ..; the soft feminine touch! We then continue by foot through the park with sea views to the next door port before returning to Cadaques for an evening stroll and dinner. Dinner Cadaques. *Walk: 8km*

### Day 6 Thursday

We drive into the Cap Creus to take a stunning walk through the wind beaten rocks to the next door port of Port de la Selva. It is a dramatically beautiful walk through a dry rocky landscape blossoming in April with rock rose bushes and broom. Up and down but a chance

of a bay swim too. Lunch in Port de la Selva. In the afternoon we will hope to take a boat ride to see the beauty of the Costa Brava. It will depend on the weather as it can be choppy. Salvador Dali incorporated this scenery so often in his paintings. Here we 'in and out' through the inlets and outlets before returning to Cadaques to relax in the sea or the hotel pool or to just wander around the beauty of the port. Dinner in Cadaques. *Walk: 15km*

### **Day 7 Friday**

After breakfast we drive to French Catalunya. We will arrive at the port of Banyuls and visit the museum of Ariside Mailol set in the Banyuls hills. We will then walk to Collioure stopping for a picnic lunch on the way with views over the Cote Vermeille (this is what the French call this part of Catalunya as it has a beautiful pink tinge to the terraced vineyards as the sun sets). Collioure is an exceptional place and we reflect this by staying in the lovely four star hotel Le Relais des Trois Mas which has wonderful views over the bay. It is an enchanting port and centred around a fortified castle that stretches into the sea. This was a centre for the Fauve painters in the early twentieth century like Henri Matisse and André Derain who loved Collioure for its special light and fluttering fishing boats. We will sample some of the great wines coming from this area: the Collioure reds and the Banyuls fortified wines. Dinner will be at the Michelin starred restaurant 'La Balette' which is part of the hotel, overlooking the bay. *Walk: 12km*

### **Day 8 Saturday**

We leave Collioure after a wonderful breakfast looking out over the sea and head for Barcelona. If you would like to stay on a couple of days in this great city we would of course be delighted to arrange this for you. It does seem a shame not to make the most of the opportunity!



*NOTE: The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions.*

**Why come with The Walking Party??**

**Because the food is fabulous and the days fun and informative!**

