

# Barcelona, a case study boomtown

The city of **Barcelona** is considered one of the most culturally relevant urban centres in Spain. Currently, it represents an intercultural hub where a robust exchange of ideas and identity continually thrives. Individuals with highly creative backgrounds are migrating to its enriching and inspirational setting to further develop concepts and projects. In terms of contemporary architecture, the Catalan capital is the heart of talent in Spain.

BARCELONA (ES) — TEXT: GONZALO HERRERO DELICADO & MARIA JOSÉ MARCOS, ILLUSTRATION: HARMEN VAN DER HORST

Architects in Barcelona contribute to this success through a huge number of initiatives in support of architecture, such as exhibitions, conferences, festivals and awards. In recent decades, architectural and urban development in the city has been recognized as among the best in the world. There are several reasons behind this concentration of talent. Most notably, it is the seat of excellent architects like Antoni Gaudí, seven of whose works have been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Another highlight is the unique 133 x 133-metre grid conceived by urban planner Ildefonso Cerdà for the Eixample district. The local government is aware of architecture's relevance here, and therefore created the post of Chief Architect to oversee architectural affairs in the city.

The vigorous development of Barcelona has been supported by three main areas of urban growth, which we will tour in this guide. Firstly, great progress occurred because of the 1992 Olympic Games, directed by former Chief Architect Oriol Bohigas. Secondly, in 2004, the Universal Forum of Cultures attempted to create a similar experience but with dull results, which involved the regeneration of an area on the eastern side of Avinguda Diagonal, the main cross-city artery. Lastly, there is a zone of reactivation currently still under construction: the 22@ district, a business development suburb in Barcelona's formerly industrial area of Poblenou, with which the primary aim is to create a new technology, innovation and enterprise incubation quarter. Through these significant interventions, the Catalan

government has transformed Barcelona into a city brand, reinforcing its tourism industry and international value.

We begin our tour with a visit to the hill, Montjuïc, where the Barcelona International Exhibition was held in 1929 – the main incentive to build the first large-scale development in the city. Coming from the airport, the bus stops at España Square, where you can walk along the majestic Avinguda de la Reina Maria Cristina. At the end of the avenue you will arrive at the western side of Montjuïc, where two fabulous icons of modern architecture are located: the **German Pavilion** and the **Joan Miró Foundation**, which, although of exceptional quality, are already familiar to many. Climbing to the eastern side of Montjuïc, we find the location of the **Sant Jordi Sports Pavilion**, designed by Arata Isozaki. This was the main venue of the '92 Olympic Games. To complete our Montjuïc expedition, it is appropriate to stop for lunch in one of the most sophisticated dining spots in Spain, the restaurant **Tickets** (1) by **Albert & Ferrán Adrià**, located on Avinguda del Paral·lel and outfitted with a fresh and bizarre design by El Equipo Creativo, a Barcelona-based firm. **Toyo Ito**, the distinguished 2013 Pritzker Prize winner, also found a place to develop his projects in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, a neighbourhood in the west of the city. Called the **Gran Via Exhibition Centre** (2), it is the primary location for new trade fair technology in the city. Next to this pavilion you will be able to find accommodations for the night in one of the most extraordinary skyscrapers in the city, designed by **Ito** together with **b720 Arquitectos**: the **Hotel Porta Fira** (3), a sinuous red tower adjacent to an office building, also by **Ito**, that reflects the hotel in its design.

The second day of the tour will start on Passeig de Gràcia, the most famous boulevard of the city, where many exclusive shops and several Gaudí monuments can be found. Stop by the **Antoni Tàpies Foundation** (4), housed in a building designed by **Lluís Domènech i Montaner**, iconic architect of the Catalan Modernist style, in 1884. The well-known team of **Ábalos + Sentkiewicz** recently →

The vigorous development of Barcelona has been supported by three main areas of urban growth.



**1 TICKETS (2011)**  
Architect: Albert y Ferrán Adrià + El Equipo Creativo (Oliver Franz Schmidt + Natali Canas del Pozo)  
Address: Avinguda Paral·lel, 164



**2 FIRA GRAN VIA EXHIBITION CENTRE (2004)**  
Architect: Toyo Ito Associates  
Address: Avenida Juan Carlos I, Hospitalet de Llobregat



**3 HOTEL SANTOS PORTA FIRA (2010)**  
Architect: Toyo Ito Associates + b720 Arquitectos  
Address: Plaza Europa, 45, Hospitalet de Llobregat



**4 ANTONI TÀPIES FOUNDATION (2010)**  
Architect: Lluís Domènech i Montaner (original building), Ábalos+Sentkiewicz Arquitectos (extension)  
Address: Carrer d'Aragó, 255



**5 MERCAT DE SANTA CATERINA (2005)**  
Architect: EMBT (Enric Miralles + Benedetta Tagliabue)  
Address: Avinguda de Francesc Cambó, 16  
Contributed by: MI\_MOA



**6 BARCELONA CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURE (CCCB) (2011)**  
Architect: Martínez Lapeña-Torres Architects  
Address: Montalegre, 5  
Contributed by: MI\_MOA



**7 FÀBRICA MORITZ (2013)**  
Architect: Ateliers Jean Nouvel  
Address: Ronda Sant Antoni, 41



**8 HOTEL ROOM MATE PAU (2012)**  
Architect: Teresa Sapey  
Address: Carrer Fontanel·la, 7



**9 HOTEL OMM (2007)**  
Architect: Juli Capella, Sandra Tarruella (interior design), Isabel López  
Address: Carrer Rosselló, 265



**10 NORTH FORUM COASTAL PARK (2004)**  
Architect: Ábalos + Herreros  
Address: Rambla de Prim 1



**11 SOUTH-EAST FORUM COASTAL PARK (2004)**  
Architect: Foreign Office Architecture + Teresa Gall (landscape design)  
Address: Rambla de Prim, 1



**12 FORUM BUILDING (2004)**  
Architect: Herzog & de Meuron  
Address: Avinguda Diagonal, 1  
Contributed by: Naomi



**13 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (CCIB) (2004)**  
Architect: Mateo Arquitectura (Josep Lluís Mateo)  
Address: Avinguda Diagonal, 1  
Contributed by: MI\_MOA



**14 DIAGONAL MAR PARK (2002)**  
Architect: EMBT (Enric Miralles + Benedetta Tagliabue)  
Address: Av. Diagonal / Cinturón Ronda Litoral  
Contributed by: MVAR



**15 ME BARCELONA (2008)**  
Architect: Dominique Perrault + AIA Salazar Navarro  
Address: Carrer Pere IV, 272-286  
Contributed by: Jose\_Garcia



**16 MEDIA-TIC (2010)**  
Architect: cloud9  
Address: Carrer de Roc Boronat, 117-121  
Contributed by: gonzalezdiostydia



**17 INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED ARCHITECTURE OF CATALONIA (IAAC) (2003)**  
Address: Carrer de Pujades, 102



**18 GAS NATURAL HEADQUARTERS (2006)**  
Architect: EMBT (Enric Miralles + Benedetta Tagliabue)  
Address: Carrer dels Pinzón, 1  
Contributed by: Naomi



**19 BARCELONETA MARKET (2011)**  
Architect: MIAS Arquitectes  
Address: Carrer del Baluart, 23  
Contributed by: miasarquitectes



**20 HOTEL W BARCELONA (2010)**  
Architect: Ricardo Bofill  
Address: Plaça Rosa dels Vents, 1

## (Barcelona, a case study boomtown)

restored the Foundation, which reopened in March 2010 with renewed exhibition spaces that recuperate the industrial character of the building. The roof terrace is especially worth a visit. Going down the Gràcia promenade we find the **Palau de la Música Catalana**, originally built in 1908, also by Domènech i Montaner. In 1989, Oscar Tusquets and Carles Díaz created an extension and restoration of the former auditorium, which received the UNESCO stamp in 1997. A nice place to grab lunch is under the shelter of a sophisticated roof by **EMBT** at **Mercat de Santa Caterina (5)**, located just three blocks from Barcelona's Gothic cathedral. The Catalan Enric Miralles, together with his partner, Benedetta Tagliabue, conceived this distinctive building's design, one that goes beyond the transformation of a neoclassical market into high-quality architecture. It also contributes to rethinking urban renewal in the surrounding streets, bringing better quality living conditions into what used to be one of the worst areas of the city, the Gothic Quarter.

In the afternoon you could go by foot to an awesome cultural belt near La Rambla, which runs from Barcelona University, past Catalonia Library and Pompeu Fabra University. There you can stop in the lively Plaça dels Àngels, a hub for skaters and urban artists alike. At the head of the square is a building by Richard Meier, the **Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA)**, inaugurated in 1995, which provoked a huge controversy at the time because of its outlandish appearance in the eyes of the city's inhabitants. While there, do not forget to have a look at the **Barcelona Centre for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) (6)**, where exhibitions, concerts and lectures are frequently organized. Viaplana & Piñón accomplished an earlier remodeling of the premises, and more recently, **Martinez Lapeña-Torres Architects** renovated the former building of Casa de la Caritat, preserving the refreshing courtyard and using the basement to improve communication and access. After this intense cultural tour, we can enjoy dinner at the **Moritz Brewery (7)** a gastronomy and cultural centre designed by **Jean Nouvel**. It comprises an ongoing postproduction strategy to transform the former Moritz beer factory into a marvellous space for enjoyment. Crossing the representative Plaça de Catalunya, where demonstrations by the 15M activists were held, you can choose between two hotels in the heart of the city: the **Hotel Room Mate Pau (8)**, a trendy place fully renovated by **Teresa Sapey**, or the familiar **Hotel Omm (9)**, which can probably be called the best and most luxurious hotel in the city, as well as the most comfortable. It is located just next to the Passeig de Gràcia, and includes great facilities like the Roca restaurant and a private spa.

The third part of our Catalan tour begins in the forum development at the eastern end of Cerdà's urban extension, Eixample. Located there are two landscape projects where you can enjoy walking, biking or skating with views of the Mediterranean Sea. Firstly, **North Forum Coastal Park (10)** by **Ábalos & Herreros**, where the architects also designed the famous public furniture, called *churret*, together with **Marta Male**. Secondly, the **South-East Forum Coastal Park (11)**, designed by FOA together with Catalan landscaper **Teresa Galí**, where the topography leads through many indigenous species of plants. The most iconic building of this area is the **Forum Building (12)** designed by **Herzog & de Meuron**. The building is triangular in shape because it occupies

the last plot of the Cerdà plan. Its main functions, such as exhibition areas and a restaurant, are placed in the blue prismatic volume suspended above the ground, and an auditorium is located in the basement. Next to this plot is **Josep Lluís Mateo's International Convention Centre (CCIB) (13)**, with its delicate facade that changes along its length. After the Forum tour, you can picnic at **Diagonal Mar Park (14)**. Designed by **EMBT**, this huge park comprises a series of paths and bridges for skating, walking and cycling, along with small boats and water games.

In the afternoon, we head to the most recently developed area in Barcelona, the 22@ district. The city council promoted a full redevelopment of this former industrial zone by replacing the existing premises with business service and light industries. Walking along the Avinguda Diagonal, we find the sophisticated skyscraper designed by **Dominique Perrault** and **AIA Salazar Navarro, ME Barcelona (15)**. The smaller, cubic building acts as a counterpoint behind the tower, which is a rectangular parallelepiped cut lengthwise in two, with one of the halves shifted skywards. This rupture of the perfect geometric block creates movement in form and volume that bestows an urban sense upon this tower inserted in the horizontal city. Located just two blocks distant is **cloudg's** contemporary design, **Media-Tic (16)**. The studio created the architecture as well as the business organization that works together with a digital city model. The building itself both generates energy and optimizes its use. Continuing through the Avinguda Diagonal, we find Jean Nouvel's project, **Torre Agbar**, an iconic, recently completed skyscraper that has become an indispensable icon in the Catalan skyline and contrasting with the Sagrada Família by Gaudí. Before departing the 22@ district it is worth visiting the **Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC) (17)**, the most international postgraduate school of architecture in Spain, a place from which the future of architecture emerges.

The Olympic Harbour is one of the most visited spots in the city, especially at night. In the middle of this mass of restaurants and discos you can find the **Golden Fish**, a sculpture by Frank O. Gehry, which acts as canopy and cooling fountain. Next stop, La Barceloneta, a crowded and bohemian zone full of beach restaurants, artisan workshops and people who talk fast and loudly. Among these narrow streets and balconies is located the **Gas Natural headquarters (18)**, the final work by **Enric Miralles** before he died. The glass tower has outstanding variety and originality in its volume, which lends it a completely different appearance whether observed from the city, the sea, or the coast. Further on, **MiAS Arquitectes** are responsible for the new **Barceloneta Market (19)**, where they created new commercial spaces with metal figures that engage with the new social identity of the citizens. Finally, you can rest at the **Hotel W Barcelona (20)** by **Ricardo Bofill**, popularly known as Hotel Vela (the 'sail hotel') due to its shape. There we can make a farewell toast to Barcelona in the rooftop bar while enjoying panoramic views of city and sea. ←

The MI Tour Guides are published in A10 magazine and available online at MIMOA ([www.mimoa.eu](http://www.mimoa.eu)). A10 readers and members of the MIMOA community may directly contribute to the guides. Your participation is welcome! Please suggest projects for upcoming MI Tour Guides by uploading your choices to the MIMOA website. **In the next issue (A10 #52 July/Aug 2013) we feature Warsaw.**

## In the next issue:

### Eurovision

#### Turkey

Eurovision presents an overview of the current state of architecture in a specific country. Turkey, a fast-growing economic power positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, is the focus in the upcoming issue.



↑ **VKV Cultural and Social Center in Golcuk, Kocaeli by TeCe Architects.**

### Ready

#### Baltic Film and Media College, Tallinn

Salto architects designed a college building while keeping in mind the role of modern media in contemporary education.



### MI Tour Guide

#### Warsaw

Poland's capital was flattened in WWII; ever since, the city has been actively replacing what was lost. After 1989, that pace accelerated, and today, large parts of the medieval and neoclassical city centre have been restored. What impact has this had on Warsaw's architecture? A10 and MIMOA seek answers to this question, but need your help! Suggest your favourite contemporary buildings in Warsaw for the upcoming MI Tour Guide by uploading them at [www.mimoa.eu](http://www.mimoa.eu). A10's new Polish correspondent, Maciej Czarniecki, will make the final selection based on your choices.

### Section

#### Facades

...and much more. A10 #52 will be published 1 July 2013.