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TIME OUT BARCELONA
Via Laietana, 20
932955400
www.timeout.cat
redaccio@timeout.cat
Publisher Eduard Voltas
Finance Manager Judit Sans

Digital business Mabel Mas
Editor-in-chief
Andreu Gomila
Art director
Diego Piccininno
Features and web editor
María José Gómez

SAVE THE DATE
www.barcelonaturisme.com
Editor Andreu Gomila
Design Irisnegro
Writers Hannah Pennell
Edited by 80 + 4 Publicacions
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01 SISTER ACT

JANUARY-MAY

From Maria von Trapp to Deborah Kerr's turn in *Black Narcissus* via Elvis vehicle *Change of Habit*, it's a well-known fact that nuns make for good entertainment fodder. The costumes are straightforward, they have an excellent moral high ground from which to fall or aspire to, and all that communal living lends itself perfectly to creating tension, frustration and perfect hiding-places for people on the run. *Sister Act* ticks all these boxes and the original 1992 film starring Whoopi Goldberg has certainly proved to have a long shelf life, generating a rapid sequel and later a musical. Showing here until May is a Spanish-language version of the latter, set in 70s Philadelphia and telling the tale of singer Deloris and her attempts to avoid the mobsters chasing her by taking refuge in a convent disguised as a nun. With Goldberg herself on board as producer for the stage version - she had it written into the T&Cs that the lead role will always be played by a black actress - and eight-time Oscar winner Alan Menken behind the original score, this is musical theatre at its most uplifting, feel-good best.

www.sisteractelmusical.com



02 GUSTAVO DUDAMEL/ ORQUESTRA SIMFÒNICA BOLÍVAR DE VENEZUELA

JANUARY 16-17

Barcelona's Palau de la Música this month welcomes Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel and his established collaborators, the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela. There is not nearly enough space here to introduce you to Dudamel, if you're not already familiar with his work. His CV has not a note wrong on it:

brought up through the legendary El Sistema in Venezuela, which has given thousands of children a musical education, he started to study conducting when he was 14 (although Dudamel himself says that child conductors are the norm in his home country) and became music director of the Bolívar orchestra just four years later. Today, he also holds the same role at the LA Philharmonic and has scored a recently-released film about South American liberator Simón Bolívar. His two concerts in Barcelona are part of a wider European tour; here he will conduct work by Beethoven and Wagner, Julián Orbón and Mahler.

www.palaumusica.cat

03 080 BARCELONA FASHION

FEBRUARY 2-6

Discover what you should be wearing, according to Catalan designers, this autumn and winter with the 15th edition of this bi-annual event to promote the local fashion industry. Expect pop-up stores, DJ sessions and catwalk presentations. It's not just about the clothes themselves, however, with talks discussing issues related to the sector, photo competitions and stands from some of the local design schools, looking to discover the next generation of 080 participants. www.080barcelonafashion.cat

04 MUSEU DE LES CULTURES DEL MÓN

FEBRUARY

Opening this year, Barcelona's newest museum, the Museum of World Cultures, promises to be exceptional, with exhibits originating from Africa, Asia, South and Central America, and Oceania, gathered since the late 19th century by both local authorities and private collectors. With close to 40,000 items in its archives—which include religious statues, clothing, artwork and books—there is enough material here to keep curious minds distracted for hours. An added attraction is the location chosen for the museum: two adjoining houses in Montcada street (just opposite the Picasso Museum) built in medieval times by wealthy families, which have been restored and merit a close inspection in their own right.

www.museuculturesmon.bcn.cat

05

ARTISTIC PRACTICE IN CATALONIA, 1950-1975

FEBRUARY 24-MAY 24

This show is being put on to complement the latest section in the MNAC's permanent collection, Modern Art up to 1950. Eventually, the pieces included in this three-month exhibition will have their own permanent space, highlighting this crucial period in Catalonia's artistic history, covering as it does the majority of the Franco dictatorship. Despite the evident limitations put in place by the fascist regime, many Catalan artists and intellectuals thrived during this time, as the displays of paintings, sculptures, films and documents attest. See the significance of works by people such as Miró, Tàpies and Montserrat Roig in the eventual transition to democracy in Spain. www.museunacional.cat



06

DESIGN FOR LIFE

FEBRUARY

Barcelona's new Design Museum opened its doors in mid-December 2014, bringing together the collections of the city's former Ceramics, Textiles, and Visual and Decorative Arts museums, some 70,000 items in total. It is located in the Disseny Hub, a building designed by some of Barcelona's foremost architects, including Oriol Bohigas, and surrounded by a moat. This exhibition, Design for



life, is the first in a planned series to take a critical look at the current role of design around the world. It will be divided up into three sections - the human body, geographical surroundings and communication - and the 100 or so objects on display will include both Catalan and international products and projects. The aim is to reflect on the difference that can be made to a design concept depending on the society it is aimed at. The innovation and creativity of the products will be analysed to understand how they serve their intended audience.

www.museudeldisseny.cat

07

PIXAR, 25 YEARS OF ANIMATION

FEBRUARY 6-MAY

In its three decades of creating feature-length films, computer animation company Pixar has won 27 Oscars, 11 Grammys and 7 Golden Globes, earned \$8.5 billion, and created numerous characters such as Woody, Nemo and Remy who have kept both children and parents entertained. CaixaForum pays tribute to these accomplishments by bringing this exhibition, created by New York's MoMA, to Barcelona for a four-month run. You'll see storyboards, models and explanations about the technology used to create the universally-loved Pixar family. www.obrasocial.lacaixa.es

08

TRIAL I ENDURO INDOOR INTERNACIONAL DE BARCELONA

FEBRUARY 8

Your jaw will drop as you see what some motorcyclists can achieve at this year's indoor trial and enduro show at Palau Sant Jordi. While such time trial events are usually staged outdoors, bringing them to an interior setting means you can enjoy the full spectrum of off-roading skill from the comfort of your seat and with no risk of mud flying in your face. Competitors will face challenges such as bouncing their bikes off barrels and loop-the-looping them over water. No wonder the Barcelona stage of the FIM X-Trial World Championship is considered the most difficult of all. www.trialindoorbarcelona.com



09

MOBILE WORLD CONGRESS

MARCH 2-5

Barcelona has established itself as the global 'capital' of the mobile phone industry, having successively hosted this congress, which is the biggest gathering for the sector, ever since its inauguration in 2009. With the creation of the Mobile World Capital Foundation three years ago, Barcelona signalled its desire not only to continue this role but

also to build on and innovate from it. The congress brings together mobile operators, device manufacturers and representatives of related industries from around the world - last year more than 85,000 professionals from 200 countries came to network, launch new products and discuss the next steps for mobile communications. One feature from the 2014 edition likely to return is its environmental initiatives, which saw the congress declared the largest event of its kind to be certified carbon neutral. www.mobileworldcongress.com



11

BARCELONA BEER FESTIVAL

MARCH 13-15

Started in 2012, this event showcases craft beers from near and far. The festival organisers want to promote the bubbly beverage as a high-quality gastronomic product and sourced over 300 different types last year, including black lager, smoked stout and summer ale. Food selected to bring out the flavours of the brews is served, there is the chance to meet some of the beer creators, and events for industry insiders are staged. www.barcelonabeerfestival.com

12

ORQUESTRA SIMFÒNICA DE BERLÍN

MARCH 2

Berlin's Symphony Orchestra, featuring the young Armenian violinist Sergey Khatxatryan, visits the Auditori with a challenging programme. Starting with the Brahms' Concerto for violin and orchestra, which debuted in 1879 and is the composer's sole work focused on the string instrument, Khatxatryan will need all his natural talent to perform a piece described as "unplayable" and not for the violin but "against the violin". As if that wasn't enough, it is followed by Rachmaninov's Second Symphony, which, while well-received from its debut by public and critics alike, lasts 60 minutes in its original format, which has often led to abridged versions being performed. www.auditori.cat

10

ZURICH MARATÓ DE BARCELONA

MARCH 15

There's no two ways about it – running is popular in Barcelona these days. It seems as though not a weekend goes by here without a sprint/jog/power walk (delete according to fitness levels) taking place. But the Zurich Barcelona Marathon is the daddy of them all - it increasingly attracts folks from abroad and has taken a place in the list of the world's most popular 42-kilometre challenges. The route zig-zags its way across town and, for those not concerned

about trying to break their PB time, offers a checklist of some of the city's main landmarks including the Camp Nou, the Arc de Triomf and a selection of Gaudí creations. In its efforts to make this an inclusive sporting event, the organisers also provide numerous entertainment points along the route for those not wearing a dorsal chip, including music and dance performances. If you haven't yet signed up, but would like your chance to take an alternative tour of Barcelona, know that last year just over 14,200 runners took part, but organisers say that registrations can go above 17,000.

www.zurichmaratobarcelona.com

13

KOSMOPOLIS

MARCH 17-22

This biennial literary festival returns to Barcelona's CCCB, still looking to expand the concept of what literature is and put it into the context of contemporary times. Past editions have explored themes such as the relationship between science and science-fiction, how new technologies can advance literature, and the importance of humour for questioning and revealing reality. In line with its belief in 'amplified' literature, Kosmopolis schedules video shorts and app workshops alongside readings and round tables. www.cccb.org



www.paulgravett.com



CCCB © MIQUEL TÀVERNA, 2013

14

PROPHETIA

MARCH 13 - MAY 24

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the Fundació Miró will in part mark the occasion with this exhibition, looking at the contemporary state of Europe, particularly the effects of the current social, political and economic crisis. It will examine the very concept of 'Europe' through 20 pieces by artists from different countries, including



Antoni Muntadas (Catalunya), Susan Phillipsz (Scotland) and Kostas Bassanos (Greece). A highlight will be the re-interpreting

of their 2012 performance work 'Prost' by Luiz Simoes and Sabina Simon.

www.fundaciomiro-bcn.org

© LUIZ SIMOES

15

PICASSO/DALÍ. DALÍ/PICASSO

MARCH 19-JUNE 28

For the first time, work by two of the last century's most brilliant artists is brought together. Following their first meeting in Paris in 1926, we observe how pieces produced by Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí echoed each other. The show is produced with the Dalí Museum in St Petersburg, Florida, where it was exhibited for four months from November last year; Barcelona is its only other venue. Seventy-five works are displayed and many have rarely been seen in public before. The overlaps in the men's lives, such as a shared fidelity to surrealism, make one wonder why we have not seen this exhibition until now.

www.bcn.cat/museupicasso



The Menil Collection, Houston Hickey-Robertson, Houston © FUNDACIO GALA-SALVADOR DALÍ, FIGUERES 2014



Successio Pablo Picasso, Florida © SUCCESIO PABLO PICASSO, VEGAP/MADRID 2014

16

FESTA DE SANT JORDI

APRIL 23

This is one of those events to which it is almost impossible to do full justice with mere words. Regularly touted as Catalonia's equivalent to Valentine's Day, the day of Sant Jordi (St. George in English and patron saint of Catalonia) is so much more than heart-shaped boxes of chocolates and uncomfortably forced Hallmark rhymes. The basic idea is that men present their sweethearts with a rose, while women gift a book. So, for the day, the streets fill to bursting with stalls selling either roses of every colour, shape and size, or books for all tastes. Bibliophiles will be in heaven, as unhurried book browsing is all but obligatory. Just hope that the weather stays fine.

www.bcn.cat/barcelonacultura
and bcn.cat/culturapopular



© TURISME DE BARCELONA / EDWIN WINKELS



17 BARCELONA OPEN BANC SABADELL - TROFEU CONDE GODÓ

APRIL 18-26

While FC Barcelona is 'more than a club', Barcelona itself is also about more than one sport. Tennis, for instance, is much-loved here - indeed many past and present stars of the game have honed their art at local training facilities - and the city's annual tournament is a highlight for aficionados of all levels. The Barcelona Open Banc Sabadell Trofeu Conde Godó, apart from

surely being the contest with the longest name in the world, gives fans a chance to see top players in more intimate surroundings than, say, Wimbledon or Roland Garros. The crowd's favourite is Rafa Nadal, who triumphed here every year from 2005 to 2013, except 2010 when he didn't actually play. Last year, he was dismissed in the quarter-finals despite being favourite once more; the eventual winner was Kei Nishikori, the first non-Spaniard to win the title in 12 years. Head to the Real Club de Tennis to enjoy the warm spring sun and see whether the local darling can recover his crown.

www.barcelonaopenbancsabadell.com

18 D'A FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE CINEMA D'AUTOR DE BARCELONA

APRIL

Barcelona's Festival Internacional de Cinema d'Autor (D'A for short) returns for its fifth edition, to showcase independent cinema both international and local. It aims to give movie buffs a chance to see productions that the big distributors would never take a second glance at. D'A likes to run risks with its programme, meaning audiences get the chance to watch, for example, a documentary about a man who repeatedly builds Tarzan sets in a forest, only to burn them down (the winner of last year's Public Choice award); or discover the oeuvre of Canadian director Denis Côté, who had eight of his works screened at D'A 2014.

www.cinemadautor.cat

19 CARMEN / BIZET

APRIL-MAY

For six nights at the Liceu operahouse, you can enjoy Carmen, the stirring Seville-based work by Georges Bizet. But this is no traditional retelling of the story of the eponymous gypsy. The man behind the staging is Calixto Bieito, and if that name means nothing to you, one of his more radical operatic interpretations included hiring real prostitutes for a performance of Die Fledermaus by Welsh National Opera, which also featured a fully nude aria and urine-drinking. Nothing quite so dramatic will be on show here in a production Bieito first created in 1999.

www.liceubarcelona.cat

20 PRIMAVERA SOUND

MAY 28-30

Arguably one of the main players on the European summer music festival circuit, this is three long nights crammed full of performances from up-and-coming local groups, some of the most critically-acclaimed contemporary names, and many others in-between. Although it differs from most of

its peers by not offering the chance to camp on the festival site, Primavera Sound is certainly not lacking in atmosphere, with multiple stages hosting anything from indie pop to hard metal, folk or experimental. Pixies, Metronomy and Arcade Fire were amongst the 229 acts who played last year. The logistics of ensuring you see your acts of choice requires planning, but is certainly worth it.

www.primaverasound.com



21

SALÓ INTERNACIONAL DEL CÒMIC

MAY

If you're a lover of X-Men, Tintin or Calvin and Hobbes, then this is the festival for you. Celebrating anything and everything to do with comics and graphic novels, the presence of internationally renowned authors such as Joe Sacco and Andrew Wildman (many of whom are available for scheduled signings) highlights its importance to fans and industry alike. Attendees are positively encouraged to dress up as their favourite comicbook characters, while added extras include video games, workshops and special guest appearances.

www.fcomic.com



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22

FORMULA 1 GRAN PREMIO ESPAÑA 2015

MAY 8-10

One of the biggest weekends on the Barcelona sporting calendar, the Spanish F1 Grand Prix drives into town once more, to find out who will be the quickest around the Barcelona-Catalunya Montmeló circuit. Officially inaugurated in September 1991, the circuit welcomed the Spanish Grand Prix back to Catalonia that same month after 17 years away. It has capacity for over 140,000 spectators, a lap

distance of 4.66 kilometres (2.89 miles) and is used by many Formula 1 teams as a test circuit. While the main event in the Grand Prix is clearly the Sunday race, there are lead-up events starting with a Pit Lane walkabout on Thursday 7th (for holders of a three-day or Sunday ticket), and the chance to watch the qualifying events on Friday and Saturday. If you go with your family, a kids zone offers entertainment for 3 to 12 year olds. In 2014, Lewis Hamilton took the podium, while Fernando Alonso, who in 2006 became the first Spaniard to win the Spanish Grand Prix, came in sixth after winning the title the previous year.

www.circuitcat.com

23

LOOP FAIR

MAY-JUNE



This three-pronged video art festival has been celebrated in Barcelona since 2003. The three-day, one-venue Fair opens to the public in the afternoons allowing them to enjoy various screenings, while the Loop Festival runs for just over a week with multiple activities open to all. It includes exhibitions at various galleries around the city, and miniScreen for young art fans to learn about techniques such as time lapse. Finally, Loop Studies schedules workshops, panel discussions and meetings for professionals.

www.loop-barcelona.com

24

OPEN ESPANYA DE GOLF RC GOLF EL PRAT

MAY 11-17

This year sees the Spanish Golf Open, part of the PGA European Tour, held at the Real Club de Golf El Prat in Terrassa, a town just half an hour away from Barcelona. This will be the 10th time in its history that the club has hosted the Spanish Open, the last being in 2011. The course itself, one of the best-regarded on the international circuit, has 45 holes designed by Greg Norman across its 210 hectares, and sits alongside the natural park of Sant Llorenç de Munt i l'Obac.

www.realclubdegolfprat.com

25

LA NIT DELS MUSEUS

MAY

Enjoy the best of Barcelona's museums with a night-time visit, thanks to this special late opening event. Part of a Europe-wide initiative that sees 40 countries and over 4,000 museums take part, last year more than 70 cultural centres in Barcelona and the surrounding area opened their doors for free into the early hours. But don't just head to the big venues: this is a great opportunity to visit some of Barcelona's lesser-known attractions such as the Arús public library, founded in 1895; Can Framis, dedicated to contemporary paintings by artists from or residing in Catalunya; and the Motorbike Museum, which includes 12 bikes found nowhere else in the world.

www.lanitsdelsmuseus.bcn.cat



26 SÓNAR

JUNE 18-20

If you know anything about electronic music, you know about Sónar. Now in its 22nd year, and with an official title of International Festival of Advanced Music and New Media Art, these days the parallel activities generate as much excitement as the acts playing at the traditional day and night sessions. Art installations, a congress dedicated to digital culture and decibel-appropriate kids' specials are just part of the extended Sónar programme that takes over many corners of the city. When it comes to the live music, the festival always features top electronic acts new and old, with such noteworthy names in recent editions as Grace Jones, Pet Shop Boys and Yelle. www.sonar.es



© OGARCIA

27 PIKNIC ELECTRONIK BARCELONA

JUNE-SEPTEMBER

Started in Montreal, the concept of Piknic Electronik is simple: each Sunday afternoon from June to September, provide a picnic space aimed at all ages where electronic music provides the backdrop, spun by different DJs from around the world every week. Families are welcome, it is popular with groups of friends looking for a gentle chill-out spot, and an environmentally-friendly vibe is encouraged. Bring your own food or buy on-site. www.piknicelectronik.es

28 FESTIVAL JARDINS PALAU REIAL PEDRALBES

JUNE-JULY

A relative newcomer on the Barcelona music festival block, this will be the third outing for this sumptuous event where the venue is almost as high on the bill as the acts. The setting is the gardens of the Palau Reial de Pedralbes, where carefully tended flowerbeds, Michelin-starred food and a lot of cava set the scene. But that is not to decry the quality of the performers, with Blondie, Tom Jones, Lana del Rey and Kool and the Gang all having appeared. www.festivalpedralbes.com



© RICHARD DUMAS



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29 LES NITS D'ESTIU A LA PEDRERA, CASA BATLLÓ, TORRE BELLESGUARD, PALAU GÜELL...

JUNE-SEPTEMBER

During the summer in Barcelona, you're never short of outdoor events that allow you to make the most of the (slightly) cooler evenings. To add to their appeal, many such events are held in buildings with splendid al fresco spaces, meaning you're spoilt for choice when looking for a city night out, particularly when it comes to

Gaudí's unique creations. In Passeig de Gràcia, La Pedrera has thrice-weekly rooftop jazz concerts and the chance to visit the Espai Gaudí (a permanent exhibition about the architect), while Casa Batlló offers suppers and cocktails accompanied by live music. If you prefer to get away from the centre of town, in its position overlooking the city, Torre Bellesguard offers panoramic guided tours, cava and varied musical acts. Palau Güell is the most exclusive venue, opening its roof terrace for just four nights last year, where it staged jazz concerts for 50 people at a time. www.lapedrera.com www.casabatllo.cat www.bellesguardgaudi.com www.palauguell.cat

30

HOTELS: A VISTA D'HOTEL. SETMANA A LES TERRASSES DELS HOTELS

JUNE

As with any city, some of Barcelona's best views can only be seen from an elevated standpoint, so this 10-day stretch when local hotels open their rooftop terraces to all is one not to miss. In last year's fourth edition, around 60 hotels took part offering over 250 free activities including Zumba classes, gourmet tapas and synchronised swimming displays. At this time of year, temperatures are warming up nicely, ideal for a cocktail at sunset – although if you plan to join the trend of terrace-ing (visiting multiple terraces in one evening), take a jacket. Barcelona nights can be long...

www.avistadhotel.cat



31

GRAN PREMI MONSTER ENERGY DE CATALUNYA MOTOGP

JUNE 12-14

With Catalonia producing multiple motorcycling stars, this will be a particularly exciting fixture in the 2015 Grand Prix season. In 2013, the winners of the MotoGP (Marc Márquez), Moto2 (Pol Espargaró) and Moto3 (Maverick Viñales) championships were all born in



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Catalonia – there is quite a tradition in some of the region's rural areas for children to start motorcycling along dirt tracks from a relatively young age, and it clearly pays off for encouraging future triumphs. Márquez successfully defended his MotoGP title last year and will doubtless be clear favourite to repeat the feat at the Barcelona-Catalunya Montmeló circuit. But there should be strong competition from the likes of his compatriots Dani Pedrosa, Espargaró, who has progressed to MotoGP, and the latter's brother Aleix: they all finished in the 2014 top 10.

www.circuitcat.com

32

GARMIN BARCELONA TRIATHLON

JUNE 21

Swim. Bike. Run. Swim. Bike. Run. It's as simple as that. Sort of. Now an annual fixture in the autumn sporting schedule in Barcelona, this contest is divided between Olympic, Sprint and Supersprint categories; regardless of the name, they all involve a lot of strength, stamina and sweat for those taking part. If you don't want to join 'em, it's certainly worth going along to watch, taking place as it does on a prime beachfront location.

www.garminbarcelonatriathlon.com



33

GREC FESTIVAL DE BARCELONA

JULY

Barcelona's biggest cultural festival features dance, theatre, music and circus staged in various city venues. Running very year since its inauguration in 1976 (the only exception being 1978), its essential characteristics are little changed since those early days. There may be more international acts nowadays, but the principal tenet of showcasing Catalan creativity holds fast. If you can, go and see an event at the Grec Teatre, from which the festival takes its name and was once practically the sole venue. An amphitheatre built on the site of a disused quarry for the 1929 Universal Exhibition in Barcelona, it is a magical setting for watching a performance on a balmy July night. www.grec.bcn.cat



© GABRIELEZUCCA



34

FESTIVAL CRUÏLLA BARCELONA

JULY 10-13

Such is the popularity of this cut-price three-day summer music festival, that its special-offer tickets for this year's events sold out just days after the 2014 edition finished. That might have something to do with the fact that the line-up last year included Damon Albarn as well as Imelda May, Band of Horses and Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. These international stars intersperse in the programme with local groups, making it an ideal place to discover new sounds as well as listening to familiar voices. www.cruillabarcelona.com



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ARAB IMAGE FOUNDATION

JULY 15- JANUARY 2016

The Arab Image Foundation is an NGO that was set up in Beirut in 1997 to promote, preserve and study photography in the Middle East. With a current archive of over 600,000 images, which it collects from countries across the region, including north Africa and areas of Arab diaspora, this exhibition at the MACBA will explore every facet of the foundation's work. From an image of Egyptian nightclub dancers in the 40s to a portrait photo of two children in Istanbul in 1911, this collection will reveal a side of the Middle East new to many of us. www.macba.cat

36

BARCELONA HARLEY DAYS

JULY 10-12

It might not seem so at first glance, but Barcelona is home to a large and active Harley Davidson community. And every year at the start of July, local H.O.G. (Harley Owner Group) members like to show off their pride and joys at this free three-day festival, while also welcoming fans from around the world. Over 20,000 gleaming machines were on display at the 2014 event, where the most popular activities continued to be the flag parade (which saw 12,000 bikes ride through the streets of Barcelona), demo rides giving non-owners the chance to try out a bike, and guided tours of the city. There is also a music festival across the three days, Spain's largest country music event, and a chance to see the newest Harley design. www.barcelonaharleydays.com

www.barcelonaharleydays.com



37 SAN MIGUEL MAS I MAS FESTIVAL

AUGUST

Many of Barcelona's music venues all but close down in August, as a result of the large number of residents taking their principal annual holidays this month. However, that doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of people around who would like to see some live performances, and into the void has stepped the Mas i Mas group, with this extensive festival that showcases a variety of genres and acts. Last year, eight spaces including the Palau de la Música

and Barcelona's city history museum, hosted concerts that ranged from jazz to funk, flamenco and techno via classical. A lot of the artists taking part are local, with Mallorcan singer Maria del Mar Bonet and Barcelona-born DJ John Talabot amongst those on the 2014 bill. International acts included jazz pianist and singer Freddy Cole (brother of Nat King), soul maestro Tommy Hunt and Japanese pianist Yoko Suzuki, who performed a mix of popular film themes, cabaret songs and classical pieces by the likes of Enric Granados and Chopin. An eclectic selection that aptly sums up the very ethos of Mas i Mas. www.masimas.com

38 GLOBUS AEROSTÀTICS D'IGUALADA

JULY

See the Catalan sky fill with a rainbow of hot air balloons at the European Balloon Festival. Held in Igualada, a town about 90 minutes from Barcelona by train, the gathering has taken place annually for the past 18 years and offers visitors the chance to see these propane-fuelled creatures at close range, with two flight times on each of the four days (early morning and evening). Activities that take place inside a balloon 'igloo', a competitive flight where contestants have to reach certain designated targets, and seamstresses making bags using balloon material are also on the programme.

www.ebf.cat

39 CIRCUIT FESTIVAL

AUGUST 5-16

Circuit calls itself 'the biggest international gay and lesbian event', and with tens of thousands coming each year for an extensive line-up of practically non-stop partying, it's hard to argue with that. Running over 11 days, highlights include Water Park Day and Night, when thousands take over the Illa Fantasia waterpark, and night-long clubbing courtesy of DJs from around the world. Organisers Matinée Group also schedule in cultural and sporting events, but let's be honest – that's not what people come for.

www.circuitfestival.net



40 FESTA MAJOR DE GRÀCIA

AUGUST 15-24

The neighbourhood of Gràcia was once an independent town, only absorbed into Barcelona proper at the end of the 19th century, and the community spirit remains strong there as evidenced by the consistent hard work put into this, their annual 'big party'. The main attraction is the street decoration competition, which sees some 25 associations strive to create the most elaborate and incredible metamorphosis of a road into, perhaps, a jungle, underwater scene or zombie hangout. The week-long festa also includes fun for the kids, lots of street food and drink, plus traditional Catalan culture.

www.festamajordegracia.cat



41 TROFEU JOAN GAMPER

AUGUST

Although involving nowhere near the excitement, tension and pride that surrounds a Barça-Real Madrid meeting, this match, which marks the start each season of the FC Barcelona team's campaign, does give you the chance to see the stars in action alongside the club's newest signings. Named for their Swiss founder, this 'cup' is traditionally played towards the middle of August, when locals are



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returning from their summer holidays but before the serious business of the Spanish league gets going. Inaugurated in 1966, it used to take a four-game format (semis, third-place play-off and final), but now it is a single friendly against a team that is, unsurprisingly, often somewhat inferior to the Catalan side and with the added disadvantage of playing in front of up to 99,000 home fans. To give you an idea of the pressure the visitors can be under at the Camp Nou, in the past four Joan Gamper, Barça has scored nineteen goals but only let in one. www.fcbarcelona.com

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FESTES DE LA MERCÈ

SEPTEMBER 23-27

Each year, Barcelona celebrates its patron saint, the eponymous Mercè, with around a week of festivities and activities. From Catalan staples, such as human towers, dancing giants and fire running, to open-air concerts, singing competitions and open days at some of the city's most important landmarks, see Barcelona let its hair down in this end-of-summer bash. It all finishes off with a monster firework display in Montjuïc.

www.bcn.cat/merce



43

CASTELLS (SANT FÉLIX -VILAFRANCA)

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

If you want to know what some local people mean when they say 'Catalonia is not Spain', this is the kind of thing they are talking about. Castells, or human towers to give them their official translation, are a unique and historic feature of Catalan culture. With references to this acrobatic hobby found from as far back as the 18th century, it originated in the Tarragona area. Nowadays, castell groups (colles castelleres) are found across the region, with members practising hard

to perfect the art of climbing on to each other's shoulders to build 'towers' as high as they can; they are deemed complete when a small child from the colla gets right to the top and raises one arm. The deftness and courage in such youngsters is truly a sight worth seeing. Colles regularly appear at festivities in towns big and small in Catalonia, with the annual late-summer festa major of Saint Felix in the town of Vilafranca one of the stellar events in the human tower calendar. Located in the Catalan wine-making region of Alt Penedès, each year Vilafranca welcomes four of the best casteller groups of the moment to create their stunning temporary edifices.

www.festamajorvilafranca.cat

44

MERCAT DE MÚSICA VIVA DE VIC

SEPTEMBER

Vic is a lovely historic town set in the heart of Catalonia. Easily reachable from Barcelona by car or train, it has many permanent features that alone would make a day trip there more than worthwhile: an enormous twice-weekly market in its central square, a Roman temple, the cathedral of Sant Pere Apòstol and an episcopal museum, to name but a few. However, each September an added attraction on the list of reasons to visit is this music festival. Ostensibly an industry event that gives agents a chance to seek out promising new acts, it fills Vic with concerts of all shapes and sizes, providing a matchless opportunity to hear what sounds are trending in Catalonia, Spain and the wider Mediterranean area.

www.mmvv.cat

45

HIPNOTIK FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER

Discover the world of Spanish hip hop with established names and rising stars demonstrating all they can do with their voices and bodies. This one-day, 10-hour music festival at the CCCB aims to provide a literal stage for freedom of expression, and the programme includes competitions, battles, graffiti, breakdance and discussions. In terms of concerts, 11 were scheduled last year, featuring musicians from different parts of the country. Artists such as MC Mr Ego, Andalusian rapper ToteKing, and dancers Kidskillz and Ruth e Izaskun are amongst those who have stolen the show in recent editions.

www.hipnotikfestival.com

46

SALÓ NÀUTIC

OCTOBER 14-18

You don't actually have to be in the market for a yacht to enjoy the sights at Barcelona's Boat Show. Taking place at the city's old port, the range of both sporting and leisure vessels on display is impressive, with over 800 types in 2014, including catamarans, fishing-boats and motor-launches, along with numerous accessories for anyone who prefers the open seas to dry land. Star of the show for both the giga-rich and the mega-curious will doubtless be the superyachts, excellent for spotting the most outlandish added extras (submarine, anyone?). Family activities and networking spaces are also provided, making this a comprehensive exhibition of all things nautical.
www.salonnautico.com

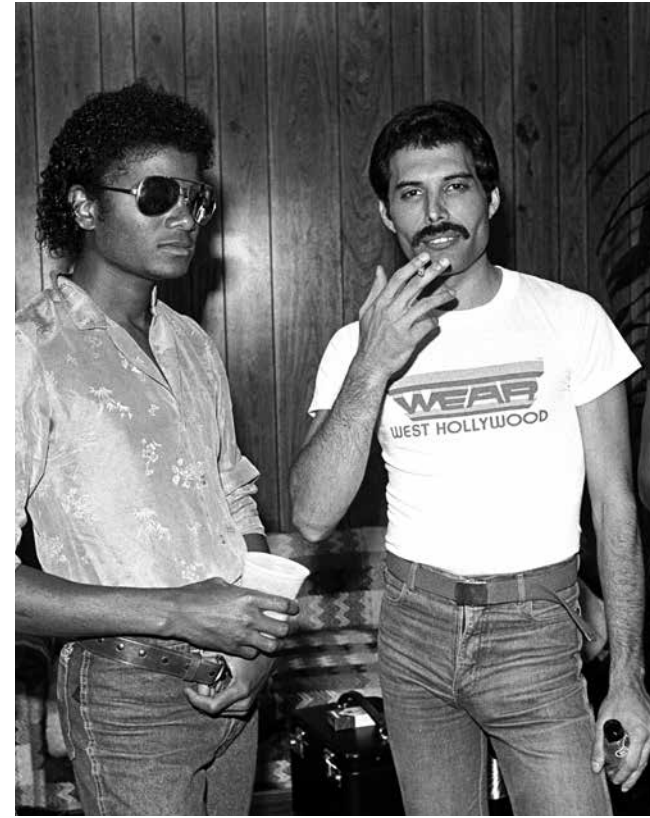


47

MERCAT DE MERCATS

OCTOBER

Enjoy the mother of all markets, as stallholders from various of Barcelona's 39 city markets, along with bakers and wine and food producers from around Catalonia, gather to show off their wares. Some 86 sellers took part last year with items including olives, fish, fruit, fresh pasta, cakes, cured meats and cheeses on display, just begging to be bought. Creative tapas were also available.
www.somdemercat.cat



48

IN-EDIT BEEFEATER FESTIVAL

OCTOBER

Where can you see Dexys (Midnight Runners) rub shoulders with Mahler and Duke Ellington? Possibly in a parallel universe where musicians are immortal and reside together on a commune, but definitely at this festival dedicated to music documentaries (specifically the 2014 edition). Each year, the organisers seek out new and classic films that delve into the stories behind some of the biggest bands in history, some of the strangest musical endeavours and some of the most unlucky

performers. Musical biography lends itself well to film, what with its ready-made soundtrack and the protagonists having to have deep reservoirs of drive and self-belief to try and make it in such a competitive and demanding industry. As well as the illustrious names already mentioned, last year's programme featured an interview with John Cage (he didn't just stay silent throughout, apparently), a look at the final years of Freddie Mercury and his life beyond Queen, and a 20-year-old Dutch film about a plan to create a string quartet where the participants each played in a different helicopter. Masterclasses and debates complete the programme.
www.in-edit.org



49

SÂLMON, EUROPEAN TALENS UPSTREAM

OCTOBER

This dance festival is a chance to see work produced by members of El Graner, a creative factory that both encourages local dancers with a unique vision of the language of movement, and offers residencies to performers from other countries to enable them to complete a personal project. In all, the stage is set for an eclectic mix of choreography that challenges and uses the body in non-traditional ways, with shows aimed at both pros and aficionados.
www.mercatflors.cat



50 SITGES - FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE CINEMA FANTÀSTIC DE CATALUNYA

OCTOBER

If you're the sort who loves going to the cinema to be scared witless, then the Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival is the place for you. The last edition opened with the fourth (and

final) in the series of REC movies, some of the most popular terror films to come out of Catalonia. Possibly to avoid any liability, organisers advise reading a description of any film before purchasing tickets, to get an idea of fear levels involved. But maybe that takes all the fun out of it, and anyway, 2014 screenings A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night, With your heart in your throat and Bombshell Bloodbath all sound quite self-explanatory. www.sitgesfilmfestival.com



51 VOLL-DAMM FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE JAZZ DE BARCELONA

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

Barcelona has a thriving jazz scene, with various venues dedicated to live concerts most nights of the year. Unsurprising, then, that its annual festival devoted to the genre is going so strong, this year celebrating its 47th edition. Inaugurated back in 1966, when the great Dave Brubeck and his quartet performed at the Palau de la Música Catalana, the event has since welcomed more of

the masters, such as Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins and Count Basie, along with a long roll-call of some of the finest jazz musicians around. In 2014, headliners included Chucho Valdés, Wayne Shorter and Zakir Hussain. Fans could also enjoy regular jam sessions at the Conservatori del Liceu and a wide range of masterclasses with the likes of double bassist Dave Holland, pianist Joachim Kühn, and vibraphonist Gary Burton. Local libraries also get in on the act, with exhibitions, activities introducing children to the key instruments, and sessions where some of the festival participants talk about their art. www.barcelonajazzfestival.com

52 CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

DECEMBER

To seriously paraphrase Frank Sinatra, if you can't get your Christmas shopping done in Barcelona, you can't get it done anywhere. From the glamorous and elegant luxury names that line Passeig de Gràcia, to the tiny independent traders in the trendy Born and everything in between, including art and craft markets and specialised gourmet stores, this is a place made for shopping, particularly at this time of year. You'll find something for everyone on your list, while enjoying the seasonal sparkle on the city streets.

www.barcelonashoppingline.com/christmas



53

CHRISTMAS - FIRA DE SANTA LLÚCIA

DECEMBER

This long-established Christmas fair takes over the square in front of Barcelona's cathedral for the weeks leading up to the big day, with stalls selling any number of seasonal accessories, including mistletoe, tree decorations and small gifts. However, if you want to experience the fair as a local, take your chance to buy some nativity figures, whether a caganer (a Catalan peasant who defecates in the corner of the stable) or a character who actually appeared in the original story.

www.bcn.cat/nadal



54

CAMPANADES DE CAP D'ANY

DECEMBER 31

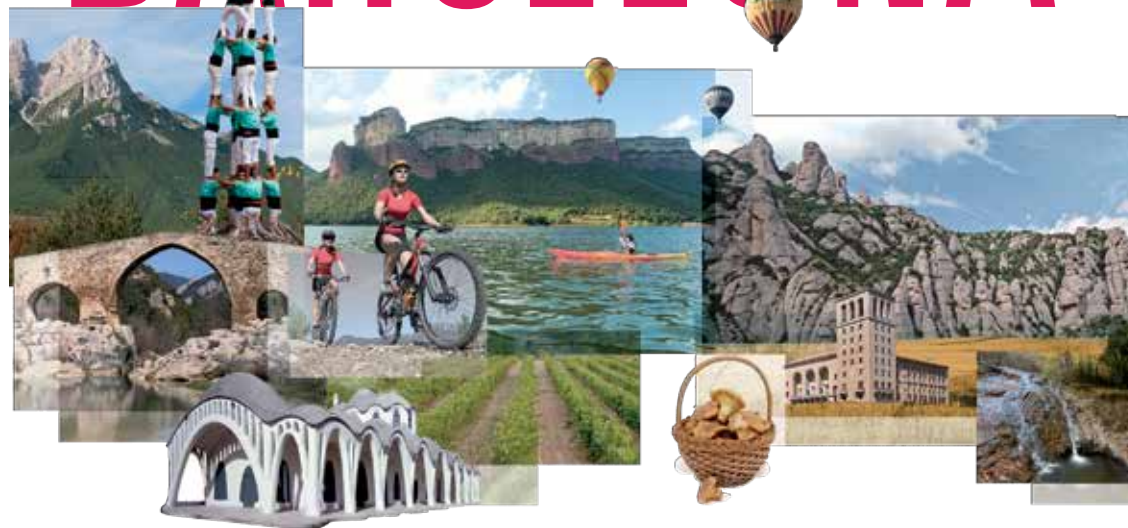
Although not a traditional New Year's Eve destination in the mould of Edinburgh, London or New York, Barcelona city council has looked recently to up the ante on the local end-of-year festivities. For last year's inaugural event, Plaça Espanya hosted a big outdoor party that included human towers and a huge firework display. The star of



the evening, though, was an enormous figure, about 15 metres tall. Positioned in front of the Magic Fountains in Montjuïc, it was part of a family-friendly show produced by innovative theatrical group Fura dels Baus, using water, lights and pyrotechnics to create a memorable welcome for the following 365 days. And if you really want to get into the party mood, local tradition dictates the wearing of red underwear for the occasion and eating 12 grapes at midnight before the bells finish - seedless ones may help with a task that can be more difficult than it sounds.

www.bcn.cat/nadal

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