



Celebrating Gaudí

Modernist architecture in Barcelona & Catalonia

16–23 November 2026 (MM 239)

8 days

Speaker: Gijs van Hensbergen

A selection of Gaudí's finest works, coinciding with the centenary of his death in 2026.

Includes private, out-of-hours visits to several of his buildings.

En route we take in the Catalan scenery that served as such an inspiration to Gaudí, from the mountaintops of Montserrat to the Mediterranean coast.

Contemporaries and other exponents of Catalan modernism are also represented; likewise successors that were inspired by Gaudí.

Led by Gaudí biographer Gijs van Hensbergen.

In April 2025, as one of his final acts, Pope Francis declared Antoni Gaudí “venerable” for his “heroic virtues”, setting him on the path to sainthood. Over decades Gaudí's reputation has snowballed, making him one of the most popular architects in history. It was not always thus; when he died on 10th June 1926, having been run-over by a tram, Gaudí's eccentric style seemed passé and soon to be overtaken by the glass and steel anonymity of the International Style.

To celebrate his centenary and imminent sainthood, Gaudí biographer Gijs van Hensbergen leads us from the flora and fauna of his childhood home in Riudoms, his “Great Book of Nature”, to the final extravaganza of the ‘almost’ finished Sagrada Família in Barcelona. Son of a boiler maker from the Baix Camp, south of Tarragona, whose people are known as ‘*gent de camp, gent de llamp*’ (people of the earth; people of lightning), Gaudí is also a true son of the soil. His seductive, almost erotic façades are easily misunderstood. The riot of colour and structural daring disguise his genius as an architect and engineer. Underpinning everything are the two cornerstones of science and faith.

For this centenary tour there are private visits to some of his greatest masterpieces, and we explore hidden corners that Gaudí, of course, carefully rounded off. “Nature has no straight lines,” he declared, as we find in his buildings the Fibonacci beauty of a sunflower head, the flexible structure of a snake's skeleton, the honeycomb marvel of the beehive – a full kaleidoscope of nature and light.



Barcelona, Sagrada Família.

Gaudí's genius is exuberant, generous, electrifying, and borders dangerously on full-blown kitsch. But, underneath it all we find sackcloth and ashes, and an incredibly devout searching soul.

Itinerary

Day 1: Garraf, Sitges. Fly at c. 11.00am from London Heathrow to Barcelona (British Airways). En route to Sitges view the exterior of the wine bodega built by the Gaudí studio for his super-client Don Eusebi Güell. The knife edge silhouette cuts a fine line between the craggy mountains and the deep blue sea. First of three nights in Sitges.

Day 2: Riudoms, Reus, Centelles. Down a dried-out river bed outside the small town of Riudoms is the Mas de la Calderera, where Gaudí spent his childhood. In Reus, his home city, we visit Casa Navas, the modernista house of rival and mentor Domènech i Muntaner. In his youth, Gaudí roamed the area, his later gardens inspired by the Parc Samà, his décor by the Roman mosaic dome at Centelles.

Day 3: Montserrat, Terrassa. For all Catalans of faith, a pilgrimage to Montserrat is obligatory. Less known are the evocative trio of Romanesque churches in Terrassa. Return to Sitges via the great Cava house of Codorníu designed by rival Puig i Cadafalch, elegantly piggybacking on Gaudí's reverence for curves.

Day 4: Sitges, Colònia Güell, Barcelona.

The Cau Ferrat museum in Sitges was built by polymath artist, playwright and collector Santiago Rusiñol. En route to Barcelona we visit Gaudí's masterpiece crypt at the Colònia Güell, followed by a private after-hours visit to his bewitching Bellesguard in the foothills above the city. First of four nights in Barcelona.

Day 5: Barcelona. Morning visit to Domènech's Palau de la Música, a touchstone of the modernista style. Cross over to the medieval cathedral – a project that Gaudí and Domènech hoped to complete. The afternoon is dedicated to Gaudí's awe-inspiring basilica, the Sagrada Família.

Day 6: Barcelona. A private early morning visit to Gaudí's earliest work, the Casa Vicens – a riot of tiles – is followed by the Park Güell and a traditional lunch in a Gaudí studio restaurant. There is an afternoon visit to the Palau Güell, returning via the medieval hospital where Gaudí died.

Day 7: Barcelona. We start with another private early morning visit to La Pedrera, Gaudí's revolutionary space-age condo. See the Teresianes convent, his most soulful work, en route to the National Museum of Catalan Art, home to entire Romanesque fresco cycles from churches in the Pyrenees, Gaudí furniture and an encyclopaedic overview of Catalan art.

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continued

Day 8: Barcelona. Visit a modernist house on the edge of Barcelona, whose design takes inspiration from Gaudí's work. Continue to Barcelona airport for an afternoon flight to London Heathrow (British Airways), arriving c. 4.30pm.

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include *Gaudí*, *In the Kitchens of Castile*, *Guernica* and most recently, *La Sagrada Familia*, and he has published in the *Burlington Magazine* and *Wall Street Journal*. He read languages at Utrecht University and Art History at the Courtauld, and undertook postgraduate studies in American art of the 1960s. He has worked in England, the USA and Spain as exhibitions organiser, TV researcher and critic and is a Fellow of the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies at the LSE.

Practicalities

Included: travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 5 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. **Hotel Calipolis, Sitges** (hotelcalipolis.com): 4-star beachfront hotel with sea views. **NH Collection Gran Hotel Calderón, Barcelona** (nh-collection.com): a centrally-located contemporary 5-star hotel. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? This tour involves a lot of walking in town centres where coach access is restricted, some of it on cobbled streets and uphill. There is also a lot of standing in houses, museums and churches. A good level of fitness is necessary. It should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. There are some long distances travelled by coach. Average distance by coach per day: 40 miles.

Group size: between 9 and 19 participants.