

POLYESTER

Grace's Guide to Eating, Sleeping and Partying in Barcelona and Sitges



Barcelona is everyone's favourite city break for obvious reasons: A quick flight from London, the best music festivals, guaranteed sunshine and of course, a beach. But have you been to Sitges? A mere half hour train from Barcelona (and the majority of the trains on the continent are air conditioned and luxurious, no cramming onto the sweaty tube here!), Sitges is known for its queer scene with lots of LGBTQ+ nightlife and not one...not two...but three! gay beaches. Gorgeous!

I was lucky enough to be invited to stay with ME by Melia Hotels in Barcelona and Sitges for a few days in both, the perfect grey weather blues curing trip! Both hotels were in excellent locations. I was smack bang in the middle of the beautiful tree-lined bustling centre of Barcelona and then relocated to the more chilled surroundings of Sitges complete with a pool and a beach view.

ME by Melia Barcelona

Staying at ME Barcelona made me feel right in the centre of the party vibes of Barcelona. It's a perfect base to discover nightlife, restaurants and bars because of its location. Just seconds away from the famous Plaça Catalunya which is said to be where the 'old town' Gothic Quarter Barcelona and the newer district, Eixample meet. The best of both worlds baby!

The hotel's own beautiful, flower decked cocktail bar Luma meant that I didn't do much exploring the first night (thanks to some really strong cocktails and a DJ playing RnB classics) If you can pull yourself off the dancefloor head to their rooftop bar with classic views of the city skyline and the Sagrada Familia. Beautiful! Their leafy garden terrace is huge too, big enough to hide in a corner the next morning trying to fix your hangover over coffee and brunch.

Don't get me wrong, I love Barcelona's beaches. But they're not the best for swimming or reclining and relaxing. So the hotel's rooftop pool was a real standout highlight for me. Who doesn't love somewhere where you can have a cocktail as well as a swim. Having a pool on the rooftop meant I could cool off during the peak of the day's heat without trekking down to the beach and interrupting the flow of the day.

ME by Melia partnered up with Sonar Festival this year and during my stay they hosted an installation of Transient, an audio-visual concert by the artists Quayola & Seta who were also playing the festival. The atmosphere in the hotel felt almost like an offsite venue for Sonar. Year round ME Barcelona serves as a hub for the city's arts and music scene and collaborations like this are part of the hotel's identity, the staff are there to connect you to events and it's a bit like having a local friend with inside track into the best parties and ways to avoid the obvious tourist spots.

I spotted the Egoiste Spa after viewing the Transient exhibition and had a deep tissue massage. This is normally a test for a hotel spa as it can be hard to get anything that feels remedial but it was incredible. They surpassed my deep tissue massage expectations (which are very high!)

Day 1

After a delicious brunch and an iced coffee on the terrace to get the day started my first day in Barcelona involved the following:

Casa Barlló

A stunningly sinuous example of Gaudi's architecture, you can go inside but I would just walk past on my way to Moco, it's a slight detour but only 5 minutes or so and so worth seeing. The architecture in Barcelona is one of my favourite things about the city. Even a short walk to the shops to get a Diet Coke has you witnessing more beauty than you'll ever see in one day in London.

Moco Museum

An independent museum housing a collection of contemporary and street art in a 16th Century Palace with curved ceilings and courtyards. The permanent collection includes pieces by Dali, Keith Haring, Basquiat and Damien Hirst as well as temporary exhibitions from artists such as Guillermo Lorca.

Picasso Museum

Right next to Moco is the Picasso museum which is an interesting contrast with the contemporary Moco. If you feel like doing a full day of exhibitions then I'd recommend both - but if you're pressed for time then it's the Moco that tops it for me.

Suculent - Rambla del Raval

Suculent serves tapas in a cozy and romantic cellar space, perfect for escaping the hot afternoon sun. Highlights for me included a red prawn ceviche and stingray with black butter and citric potatoes. Finished off with a delicious, robust vermouth (or vermut). At 55 euros for a 9 course lunch Suculent is perfect for a long, boozy lunch. Leave at least two hours to properly enjoy, no rushing here! 3-5pm would be local lunch style. After rolling home it was time for a siesta with a sunbathe and a swim at the rooftop bar.

It's super easy to go cocktail bar hopping in the El Born district. There are so many great bars really close together and I think this is one of the most fun ways to have a night out in Barcelona. These are my top bar picks in El Born, all a short walk from each other.

Super Super

Great, friendly, casual place to start with impeccable food to line the stomach before a night of boozing. Gorgeous white tiles and cool marble make up the interior and they do a banging sangria! Perfect before you move on to dingier spots

Collage Arts and Social Club

Really fun and vibey drinking den vibes. Head here if you want party vibes, drinks that come on fire and somewhere that's heavy (very heavy) on the rum!

Paradiso

This one is probably my favourite. Once voted the 3rd best bar in the world! There's a speakeasy theme so you have to go through a fridge in a pastrami deli to get to it (I know, I know) But gimmicks aside it's the perfect type of dramatic, dimly lit bar with dry ice Negronis and ice cool and super dirty Martinis.

Day 2

Mercat de la Boqueria

This famous food market is definitely popular with tourists, think Borough Market in London vibes, but well worth a visit. Super close to the hotel and it's really gorgeous. Drink a fresh fruit juice, buy some jamon to sneak home through customs and make sure you visit the famous Pinotxo Bar (that's had the same owner for 42 years!) for some 'Gilda' pintxos.

Carrer dels Tallers

This is a pretty, windy street full of vintage shops. They're not the expensive well curated kind, more the dig for treasure kind. One or two even sell all clothes by the kilo. Lots of gorgeous piles to rummage through to try and snag some vintage Loewe (if you're lucky!)

Terrenal

The flagship restaurant of ME Barcelona, a beautiful space filled with light, wood and plants and serving local produce with a lot of vegetarian options, straight from their own vegetable garden. If you eat meat, modern takes on Spanish cuisine include a flaky and moist seabass baked in clay and a lacquered beef rib. Make your lunch late, long, relaxed and the main meal of the day to truly fit in.

After lunch I'd recommend going to one of two of Barcelona's pop up festivals that run one weekend every month during the summer.

Palo Market Fest

Palo Market has street market party vibes, there are lots of interesting clothes, crafts and things to buy but also live music and beers and food.

Soundit

Soundit is also a day party (4pm-midnight) but is a bit more of a rave up. Electronic music and dancing in the sunshine with the odd food truck.



ME by Melia Sitges Terramar

After a few hedonistic days in the centre of Barcelona, time to go to Sitges. It's about a 45 minute drive between the two hotels, or you can get a short train, and it feels like a whole other world. ME Sitges Terramar has more of a wellness focus than ME Barcelona, a more serene feel away from the speakeasies and nightclubs and cocktails. Breathe in, breathe out.

There's an outdoor pool surrounded by Bali beds with an ocean view as well as Yoga, Meditation and Reiki on offer. The Spa and Treatment centre is the main focus at the hotel and they offer an extensive treatment menu including 30 minute massages that you can take by the pool. Very glamorous! Or opt for longer massages, reflexology and facials in their treatment centre.

If you decide to venture out again, Sitges is really known for its LGBTQA nightlife, its annual Carnival, horror film festival and classic whitewashed old town. Lots to take in!

Day 3

It's a no brainer, ME Sitges is right on a beach, as in walk from the sea to the bar in your costume close. I think it's worth skipping the busy bustling beach in Barcelona, avoid a watered down ten euro Mojito and save the sandy toes for the superior Sitges. The beach just at the front of the hotel has energy but isn't crowded and the water is clean and clear. Perfect for stress free swimming.

Beso Sitges

The ME Sitges Terramar restaurant, Besos Sitges, is a highlight. The menu focuses on seafood which makes sense if you're right by the beach. Expect huge oysters served with pickled shallots, juicy garlicky clams and clean and fresh mussels in a spicy tomato broth as well as several different versions of paella served on an open terrace with panoramic views of the ocean. If you can see the sea you'd be daft to turn down the seafood.

The walk to Sitges old town is about 20 minutes and all along the beach. It's a beautiful medieval town with cobbled streets, narrow winding roads and whitewashed buildings. Its sleepy feel makes it feel worlds apart from the busy, bustling Barcelona but with enough life to make it feel welcoming and worth a visit.

Radío ME Sitges Rooftop Bar

Watching the sun set on the 8th rooftop bar surrounded by the sea was one of my favourite things I did during my whole stay. Even if you go out partying in Sitges later in the evening make sure you are here for sunset. The sins of the weekend have been washed away by the lapping of the waves and a gorgeous, orange sunset. Or something like that.

Calle del Pecado

If you want to experience the Queer nightlife that Sitges is famous for then this is where you should start. Translating as the Street of Sin its a thoroughfare lined with Queer bars are the starting point of most Sitges nights out. For such a small city with sleepy fishing village vibes the nightlife is incredible, almost like a baby Ibiza. Coincidentally, Pacha own a bar here called Pachito. Lots of places are open til 2am if you feel like the sunset left you feeling a bit Too Serene and want to dance the night away again.

Words: [Grace Ellington](#)

