



Explore, experience, enjoy...

Catalonia **Hertz**

Barcelona may be the bustling heart of Catalonia, but the region north of the capital is the place to get your rocks off. The craggy coast of the Costa Brava is dotted with timeless fishing villages and secretive beaches, but head inland and you'll find lush volcanic landscapes that are ideal for the adventure sports nut.

Try our fabulous Hertz roadtrip!

We have compiled the following two-day tour that introduces you to what we believe are the best offerings the Catalonia region has to offer.

If you're craving the blue Med, head straight to the beaches and fishing villages strung along the Costa between **Blanes** to **Port Bou**. Dive the ocean corals at **L'Estartit** and be surreal at the **Dali Museum at Figueres**. From there you begin the exhilarating climb through the **Garrotxa National Park**, through beech forests and the medieval towns and villages of **Banyoles** and **Santa Pau**, before heading back to soak up the mineral-rich waters of **Caldes de Maravella**.



Recommended high points and route stops

Palafrugell – Buy fine wines

Al Gore and José Carreras are fans of this smart, family-run **Casa Serra** food emporium. You'll find it set back two miles from the smarter strip of Costa Brava coast, between Begur and Llafranc. It's worth sniffing out for great value Spanish wines and sugary Bispalenc cakes.

L'Estartit – Dive into the blue

This gorgeous beach resort is also a departure point for the **Medes Islands** (a mile offshore), an archipelago of seven islands with coral reefs teeming with marine life. Grab some scuba gear at one of the local diving centres, take a glass-bottomed boat tour or just kick back on 5km of pristine beaches.

Figueres – Be surreal

The **Dali Museum** is set in a once-crumbling theatre opposite the church where the artist was baptised. Its bizarre ochre colour and egg battlements merely set the tone for what's to come inside. Illusions include gazing at a mirror through Mae West's nostrils and the Palace of the Wind room – Dali's take on the Sistine Chapel's famous fresco.

Santa Pau – Float away

From Banyoles, meander along the picturesque C1524 to the village of Santa Pau for a scenic balloon flight. Gaze down at the cobbled streets and Romanesque church before taking a trail leading to the forested Garrotxa volcanic region. Crunch over the lava beds before crossing a ridge into the stunning Fageda d'en Jorda beech woods.

...from hidden beaches to all-out adrenaline, live life on the edge....

Caldes de Maravella – Swim in bubbly

Chill out with a spa treatment in the mineral-rich waters of **Balneari Vichy Catalan**. The Romans discovered bubbly Vichy Catalan water, and now you'll find it on every board room table in Catalonia. This is your chance to take a dip.



Hertz recommend taking this roadtrip in a funky convertible!

Need to know information

- **Round circuit:** 230 miles (370 km) 6 hours driving time approx.
- **Best season:** year round for watersports; December to April for skiing.
- Many motorways have tolls (peaje). Pick up a ticket before entering and pay on exit (cash or card). Alternative routes are signposted.
- Petrol stations are open late but are few and far between in rural areas so stock up.
- **Soundtrack:** José Gonzalez (Venerer).
- **Essential item:** Pentax Optio Wpi waterproof camera.



Top five must see places...



Catalonia Must Sees

If you find yourself with some free time on your hands or you can just squeeze in one trip then take your pick from the following five gems. Roll mouse over picture to enlarge it.



Blanes – Garden with a view

Drive sharply uphill from Blanes seafont to the lush **Mar I Murtra** (Sea and Myrtle) gardens. An hour's green walk through this tropical haven takes in spiky cacti forests, shady bamboo and banana trees and timeless views out over the sea.



Cadaqués – The art of eating

An hour's cruise up the coast is the classic white-washed fishing village of Cadaqués – hangout for avant-garde artists including Picasso and Dali. These days it's more chic than "bohemian retreat", and a perfect spot to while away a few hours. Visit Dali's home at nearby **Port Ligat** or the three-Michelin-star **El Bulli**, a short drive away (April-September only; reservations mandatory).



La Vall d'En Bas – Go back in time

To see ye olde Catalonia, head south from Olot and take the winding country road towards **La Vall d'En Bas**, passing farmsteads, all the way to **Els Hostalets d'En Bas**.



Sort, Noguera Pallaresa Valley – Waterworld

Adrenaline junkies should head west to the **Noguera Pallaresa River** – it's the most challenging white-water spot in Spain. Whatever your bag – rafting, canoeing or the latest must-do extreme water sport, hydrospeed – there are over 50 navigable kilometres to play with, gushing down from the high Pyrenees. Don't forget your armbands.



Vall d'Aran – Ski like a king

Straddling the French border at 1,800 metres altitude is the trendy ski resort of **Baqueira Beret**. Fanning out over the beautiful Vall d'Aran, it was all but inaccessible five years ago. Now it offers the best downhill skiing and boarding in Spain (ask King Juan Carlos, he skis here every year).