

# PANORAMA

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## Catalan Charm



This delightful autonomous region of Spain, inspires innovation, enchants executives, and tempts tourists from the U.S. and beyond.



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### Catalonia

Spain's most dynamic autonomous region combines knowledge and creativity to become the Mediterranean's business and tourism capital.

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### 22@ Barcelona

Barcelona's former industrial heartland is transforming into a cluster community of ICT, media, biotechnology, energy and design.

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### Healthy Innovations

The Puigvert Foundation has an international reputation as a pioneering center of excellence for genito-urinary disorders and kidney transplants.

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### Gaudí and ICT

High-tech entities thrive in eye-candy surroundings that continue to delight the investors who call the region home, and keep the tourists flocking in.

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# CATALONIA

## Mediterranean Magic Draws Investors

Barcelona blends cutting-edge innovation with gorgeous Gaudí architecture and art.

**F**or years one of Europe's most popular tourist destinations, Catalonia remains a magnet for pioneering businesses from around the world as it enhances its well-deserved reputation as the ideal environment for innovative enterprises.

Home to more than 3,000 foreign companies, Spain's most affluent autonomous community, one of 17 such regions, offers far more than culture, cuisine, and spectacular architecture as it becomes a major business hub with a growing global presence.

The beautiful and diverse region borders France and Andorra in the north, the Mediterranean sea in the east, the region of Valencia in the south, and Aragon in the west. With generous tax breaks, affordable business space, excellent infrastructure, and easy access to regional and worldwide markets, Catalonia is taking on an increasingly important role in the development of innovation and knowledge.

While its lively capital, Barcelona, attracts millions of visitors each year, major international brands such as Sony, IBM, and Nestlé have taken up residence in the region, attracted by generous government incentives and excellent communications. This is confirmed by annual surveys of international business executives that continually rank Barcelona as one of the best cities in Europe for quality of life, value for money of business premises, and low taxes.

Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira, Vice-President of the Government of Catalonia (The Generalitat), says the region enjoys an excellent track record in dealing with foreign companies and that direct flights from North American cities such as New York to Barcelona have ensured Catalonia has a vital presence on the "world economic map." The



The innovative quarter of Barcelona, 22@.

current administration is simplifying and speeding up the bureaucratic process involved in setting up and running operations, and Carod-Rovira is keen on the decentralization of Catalonia from the federal government in Madrid. "We do not want to become the great spa of Europe where only retired people come and enjoy our good climate; nor do we

want to be known for just our beaches or a business model based on cheap labor," he says. "Our model is based on innovation, preparation and training. We currently have 60 offices throughout the world, including New York and Paris, that will see efficient use of human resources and materials as well as raise our profile.

"Businesses in Catalonia have clearly seen how new technologies have

transformed the traditional economic system and the enterprises that have increased their exports over the past year are those linked to the new technologies."

Home to more than seven million people, Catalonia consists of the four provinces of Girona, Lleida, Barcelona, and Tarragona. Since 2006, it has enjoyed

more fiscal autonomy from Madrid, thanks to the approval by referendum of a reformed version of the 1979 Statute of Autonomy. The region takes great pride in its own language, identity, and flag, with its international profile given a huge boost by the successful hosting of the 1992 Olympic Games. It was home to Spain's most famous architect, Antoni Gaudí, whose stunning designs are

among the most impressive in the world.

The headquarters of the Mediterranean Union, Barcelona is also a key destination for businesses and the venue for hundreds of conferences and exhibitions every year. The city's hospitality sector is cashing in on this trend, with a large collection of hotels focusing on attracting greater numbers of business guests by offering more business-oriented services and facilities. Its international airport is being expanded to receive 50 million passengers per year, as more airlines from the U.S. and Asia operate direct flights to the region.

Like Miami, Barcelona is an important departure and arrival point for major cruise liners, with tens of thousands of tourists passing through its port every year to navigate across the Mediterranean and beyond. Both cities are also key financial centers and boast state-of-the-art business parks that are home to scores of innovative enterprises throughout a wide range of industries and markets.

### A hot-bed of new industry

Catalonia's 19,900 square miles house more than half of the 6,000 or so foreign companies that operate in Spain. Of that impressive total, more than 40% first arrived more than a decade ago, a figure that clearly shows how international firms enjoy a pronounced return on investment and are highly satisfied with the economic climate. More than 60% of all North American companies with operations in Spain are based in Catalonia. The region also hosts 70% of all Japanese businesses, 62% of French companies, 61% of German firms, 47% of U.K. companies, and 54% of Italian and Belgian enterprises.

Last year, Catalonia's exports totaled €50 billion (U.S.\$71.8 billion), while total imports reached €76.2 billion

**"We want U.S. firms to form bases that will act as bridges to Europe, Africa, and Asia."**

(U.S.\$109.4 billion). The region generated 19.8% of Spain's total GDP in 2008—above the EU average—with expenditure on R&D amounting to 1.4% of GDP. Its 2008 GDP of €204,127 million (U.S.\$293 billion) is similar to that of Finland and Denmark, and higher than that of Ireland. The region exports more products than Portugal. "Catalonia has to be proactive and open to markets throughout the world. The Spanish market is very important to us, but the majority of our products are sold in the rest of the E.U.," adds Carod-Rovira. "The world is opening up to Catalan businesses."

Historically a strong textile manufacturing zone, this part of the Iberian Peninsula now has a diversified manufacturing sector that accounts for 25% of its economy and has made it a hub for production activities that offer high added value. Leading food, automotive, packaging, chemical, pharmaceutical, and electronics companies all have operations based here. More than 20% of these manufacturing companies export their products, with Germany, Italy, France, and Portugal the main destination markets. More than 75% of Catalan goods are exported to other E.U. nations, with Catalonia accounting for 27% of Spain's total exports.

The region's growing appeal as a base for emerging industries with strong potential for growth is demonstrated by heavy investment in the aeronautic, bio-technology, recycling, wind, and solar power industries. This focus



**Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira**  
Vice-President of Catalonia

**"Businesses and enterprises have seen how new technologies have transformed the traditional economic system."**

on innovation has also resulted in it becoming a center for companies that focus on activities and industries such as R&D, logistics, and engineering and design. This successful approach to an innovation-led environment has seen a flood of foreign direct investment (FDI) arrive in Catalonia, in a wide range of projects, sectors, and industries. Flexibility is one reason for such success, with more than nine out of ten of Catalan companies classified as SMEs thus allowing greater scope for specialization.

Health care is at the forefront of innovation in Catalonia with local government officials and health experts working closely with various technology companies to discover and develop new medicines and equipment. One such example is Biocat which aims to build the right environment for turning biomedical research into value and consolidating biotechnology as a key economic driver.

The region's hospitals, clinics, and health centers are also winning a greater share of the estimated €40 billion (U.S.\$57.4 billion), international health

tourism market. The Generalitat's Health Minister, Marina Geli, says: "Catalonia is the world leader in transplants and every year we receive more health tourists, which is a strong fundamental in the private sector. There are many synergies between the public and private health-care sectors. We also have a very strong and important pharmaceutical sector that employs more than 20,000 people and generates sales of €6.4 billion (U.S.\$9.1 billion). Around 53% of all laboratories in Spain are based here." One of the leading organizations in the health-care sector is Fundació Puigvert which is one of Barcelona's most prestigious health-care providers in the fields of genitourinary disorders and kidney transplants.

Transport has been identified as one of the crucial factors for the region's future economic growth. Officials are creating industrial hubs across the provinces to speed up deliveries and reduce transport costs. Catalonia enjoys rail, road, air, and sea links to many other parts of the country and Europe as a whole. As Carod-Rovira reveals, the region has ambitions to stretch its reach to the four corners of the globe. "Looking forward, North Africa is a priority for us with

regard to opening up markets there, along with Latin America, Asia, and the Far East, particularly China and Japan," he states.

The region is also home to some of Europe's top business schools. Formed in 1993 through an agreement between the Generalitat and the University Pompeu Fabra, the Escola Superior de Comerç Internacional (ESCI) is helping put Catalonia-based companies on the global business map by offering specialist courses in international business management to professionals wishing to expand their businesses into international markets or create new opportunities in foreign markets. "Catalan businesses are small, but they export a large amount of products to many international markets with a great deal of success," says ESCI director, Xavier Cuadras.

Meanwhile, a pioneering urban, economic, and social project, 22@Barcelona is transforming 202.34 hectares of industrial land into a business and residential area. "U.S. companies can come and set up a base here that will act as a bridge to the rest of Europe, North Africa, and the Far East," says city Mayor, Jordi Hereu.

## Innovation and internationalization

Globalization has had an important impact on education. The world economy has diversified and businesses increasingly require professionals capable of working effectively across the cultural and political spectrum. With this in mind, the government of Catalonia and Pompeu Fabra University created ESCI-Superior School for International Commerce in 1993, with the objective of training experts in international business that would be able to work in all global markets. As Xavier Cuadras, director of ESCI, explains, "We receive students from all over the world and have collaborated with universities and international business schools to facilitate student and teacher exchanges. We also maintain a close relationship with the global business community, which explains why 100% of our graduates find work straight away."

The teaching of languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Russian is one of the pillars of ESCI. The school offers a college degree in Business and International Marketing, and five Masters and Post-graduate qualifications, namely: Masters in International Business, Masters in International Management, Masters in International Retail, Post-graduate in Women's Leadership and Post-graduate in International Business.

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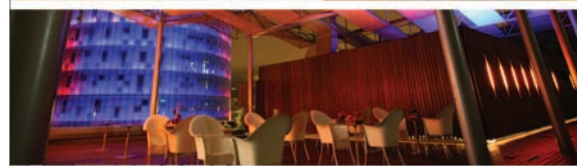


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# Silicon Valley, Mediterranean-style

Barcelona is fast becoming a European reference point for knowledge-based industries.

**C**reated in 2000, the 22@ municipal society was formed to promote and manage one of the most ambitious and innovative projects Barcelona—and indeed Europe—has ever seen. With a brief that involved transforming the city's industrial wasteland into a modern hub of knowledge-centered businesses, the 22@ team set to work designing a blueprint for urban renewal that could become a model for other European cities.

Unlike other city regeneration projects, 22@ draws on the unique concept of having cutting-edge companies coexist with universities and research, training and technology-transfer centers, as well as homes, amenities and green spaces. Spanning 198.26 hectares, it will, when completed, be the largest of its kind in Europe, creating 4,000 new homes and more than 150,000 jobs.

"Poblenou, on the periphery of the Catalan capital, was originally the site of numerous textile factories," explains Jordi William Carnes, Deputy Mayor of Economic



Barcelona's 22@ Technology District, with its landmark Torre Agbar.

Development. "During the Seventies, however, the factories started closing, and for almost thirty years, the district was symbolized by abandoned textile mills and obsolete factories. After the Olympics in 1992, the council embarked on a complex operation to build new residential flats through private developers—offering both social and private housing—and a new university campus.

Could 22@ effectively become a Silicon Valley for the region, then? For Europe? It's a possibility. Carnes recently headed a delegation to visit the Californian technology hub with the aim of talking to the players already present in Barcelona—Yahoo, Hewlett Packard and Oracle, for example—about their expansion plans and to firm up some bilateral agreements with other entities. "We are interested in U.S. firms who see Barcelona as a platform

and there is real potential in the creative sectors, particularly media and publishing. As Jordi Hereu, the city's Mayor, notes: "The push towards creativity is important for the region. Barcelona is not rich in natural resources and it is not the state capital, so we must focus on the innovative companies that both people from here and outside can develop. We place a huge emphasis on culture—it is something that will define Barcelona in the future."

Carnes agrees. "The capacity Barcelona has to create media products is spectacular," he says. "In fact, many of the latest products to have triumphed in the Spanish-speaking world have been conceived in Barcelona. The city is a laboratory of ideas. Barcelona is also a reference point in fashion, not in the same way as Milan or Paris, but it does have the potential to specialize. Barcelona hosts Bridal Week, for example, and in the past, Bread and Butter—one of the most important avant-garde catwalk events in the industry."

Some €180 million (U.S.\$259 million) is being invested in infrastructure, and when it is finished, in 2010, 22@ will feature state-of-the-art amenities conducive to training and research. All in all, it will be a space that firmly encourages synergies between universities, technology, research centers, businesses and other institutions. Expert, quality human resources will be

guaranteed. "We offer many incentives to companies choosing to set up their concerns here," Carnes says. "There is an obvious advantage for operators to have all their activities in the same place, rather than distributed around the city. In this respect, 22@ offers an important benefit in terms of economies of scale, which is important for a growing company."

## A prime location

The 22@ district also benefits from being in a central location. It is served by two major highways and has excellent and efficient public transport connections that include an ever-expanding subway. It lies within easy reach of Barcelona's central business district and the International Convention Center—which is one of the largest in Europe with capacity for more than 15,000 delegates. In terms of its global connections, Barcelona is served by an international airport, which opened a new terminal in June this year, and a modern port, which will have a new terminal within two to three years. There is also a World Trade Center and a Free Zone, with some 50 hectares of space available for new companies which would offer added value to a 22@ company specializing in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals or agroprocessing, or those involved in import and export businesses.

"We do not want U.S. investors to just see Barcelona as a place to come for congress or tourism," Carnes concludes. "We want them to see it as a landing platform, a place from which they can access other markets. The current economic situation means American investors are experiencing difficulties with investments in the Middle East and Latin America. We could be a strategic point between the E.U. and Israel, for example—the place where North American investors access the rest of Europe from a cost-effective location, which has a good technology and business climate, and, importantly, social cohesion and no conflict."

**"We would like 22@ to be associated with ICT, media, biotechnology, energy and design."**

Development. "During the Seventies, however, the factories started closing, and for almost thirty years, the district was symbolized by abandoned textile mills and obsolete factories. After the Olympics in 1992, the council embarked on a complex operation to build new residential flats through private developers—offering both social and private housing—and a new university campus.

"We are now building offices and encouraging cluster companies to come here. We want the area to be associated with the ICT, media, biotechnology, energy and design sectors."

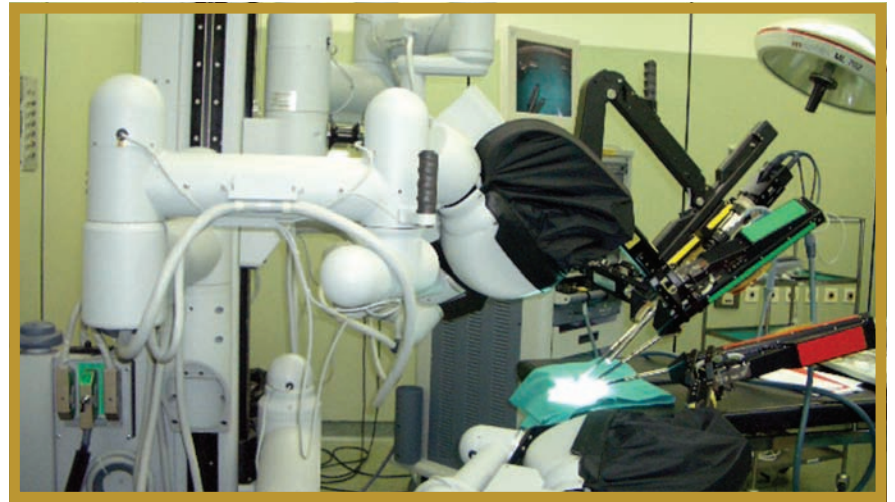
from which to reach the rest of Europe, the Mediterranean and even North Africa, that are focused on Barcelona as one of the reference points for Research and Development."

## A creative concept

Since it came to life in the year 2000, the 22@ district has attracted more than 1,000 companies, 47% of which have been newly created, along with 32,000 new jobs. These statistics make it one of the motors of Barcelona's economy, along with tourism and congresses. More than half the companies are knowledge-intensive



Fundació Puigvert is expanding its premises to build more clinical laboratories.



The Da Vinci robot installed in Fundació Puigvert aids prostate surgery.

# Fundació Puigvert: a beacon for care

A pioneer in the field of genito-urinary disorders and kidney transplants.

**S**ituated within the grounds of one of Barcelona's most prestigious hospitals, Fundació Puigvert ("The Puigvert Foundation") offers expert medical care and training in three important disciplines: urology—which deals with genito-urinary disorders; nephrology—a medical specialty which deals with certain kidney disorders; and andrology—the science of the dysfunctions of the male reproductive system. It was founded by Professor Antoni Puigvert in 1961 and, nearly five decades later, is a center of excellence at both international and national levels. The non-profit entity remains dedicated to expanding and perfecting care in the aforementioned scientific fields.

Fundació Puigvert has become a leading teaching hospital, thus fulfilling the dream of its visionary founder, who saw the benefit of integrating certain specialties and providing teaching and health care under the same roof.

To date, it has carried out some 600,000 case studies and houses between five and six million X-rays. The management is now looking into devising a digital archiving system. "Fundació Puigvert is different in that it offers both private and public health care; so patients receive the same standards of care, just in



different surroundings," explains Fundació Puigvert's president, Esperança Martí i Salís. "We are among the best in our field, thanks mainly to our huge volume of activity. We treat 55% of all prostate cancer patients in Catalonia, which is more than all the bigger hospitals combined.

"The Catalan model of health care is multidisciplinary and creates a level of competence that highlights best practice. We have a very efficient network and because of this, a better and more diverse range of health-care services compared to other autonomous communities in Spain."

Fundació Puigvert is, the president explains, above the European average for kidney transplants, and for the treatment of other pathologies.

Fundació Puigvert prides itself on offering exemplary health education. Every 15 days, for example, it holds information sessions for patients on how to raise their quality of life.

Sessions are attended by a medical team made up of cardiologists, nutritionists, doctors and nurses who explain and resolve any questions that have arisen during the patients' medical procedures. This kind of health education is available in very few centers, despite the obvious benefits for patients.

The foundation is also commissioned by the National Transplant Organization (ONT) to undertake the training of medical teams responsible for performing live organ transplants. As Martí explains, a marked reduction in road traffic accidents in recent years has seen a decrease in the number of organs becoming available, which means it is becoming increasingly common for kidneys to be donated by family members or close friends, with the consent of a judge.

These complex operations can now be done by laparoscopy—a less invasive "keyhole" surgery, which allows the donated kidney to be cared for in the best possible conditions. It also means less discomfort for the patient, despite being a complicated procedure. Fundació Puigvert

currently offers five courses for some 20-25 people who are selected by the ONT.

Fundació Puigvert is currently in expansion mode. "The investigations we undertake are clinical as well as basic, and because of this we are expanding the installations to build more laboratories," the president explains.

On an international level, Fundació Puigvert collaborates with the American Urology Federation, which encompasses all the urological societies across the Americas. "We have an agreement with them, whereby they admit specialists that we have trained on an internship basis," says Martí. It is also accredited by the European Academy of Andrology—the only Spanish institution to have this—and the European Board of Urology.

"Finally, I would say that apart from excellent care and scientific assistance, the most important facet of a medical institution are the people who work there, the training team, and here we are lucky to have a first-class staff," she says. "We promote young professionals from the inside. The fact that we do not receive any subsidies means we work harder and have both independence and freedom.

"All of this allows us to maintain quality and will assure a good future for the foundation."

# Catalonia Leads The Way In ICT Ideas

Hi-tech enterprises from around the globe are investing heavily in pioneering projects.

**C**atalonia's ICT industry is leading the way in R&D in advanced technologies and telecommunications innovation, with more than 1,600 companies employing approximately 50,000 people. Dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), this key sector is well supported by an advanced infrastructure of hi-tech data, voice, audio, Internet broadband, and visual networks.

Such is the region's importance to the country's ICT industry that the headquarters of the regulator for Spain's entire ICT sector—Comisión del Mercado de Telecomunicaciones (CMT)—are located in Barcelona.

Led by Minister Jordi Ausàs, the Generalitat's Department of Governance and Public Administration is responsible for the modernization of the local administration and management

of operations including ICT. The autonomous government is also helping to build a fiber-optic ICT network offering broadband Internet, wireless Internet, and digital services.

"Telecommunications is a very important part of our economic vision," says Ausàs. "Barcelona, in particular, has great potential from an ICT point of view. We have four priorities: to connect people to the networks; promote the benefits and advantages of the networks; encourage companies to develop their ICT operations, especially SMEs; and establish a public enterprise to manage all the information and technology."

Launched in late 2001, the Centre Tecnològic de Telecomunicacions de Catalunya (CTTC) is the first research institute and technology center in Spain devoted to physical layer technologies for communications systems. The

organization's scientific activity focuses on five research areas oriented to the major transport technologies for digital communications, such as wired, optical, and wireless systems.

of reference in the RDI field. It was established in the year 2000.

The agency is committed to making local companies more competitive and its primary activity is to evaluate the

**"Telecommunications is a very important part of our economic vision."**

One of the main objectives of the CTTC is to stimulate technological innovation, with CTTC developing a portfolio of patents to transfer the developed technology to the industry. Led by director Miguel Ángel Lagunas, CTTC works closely with locally-based ICT companies, providing help, support, and independent advice. As Lagunas explains: "Most of our work tends to be with smaller ICT firms and when they have a new product or idea, they ask us to see if it is viable or not."

The forward-thinking group has also established links, exchange programs, and transfers of knowledge to similar organizations in several countries around the world, including the U.S.

Founded in 2003 by the Ministry of Innovation, Universities, and Enterprise of the Generalitat and the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Catalan Institute of Nanotechnology (ICN) is a pioneering scientific organization focused on nanoscience and nanotechnology.

The ICN concentrates on theoretical study, experimental observation and control of matter at the nanometric scale, synthesis and fabrication, functionalization, characterization and applications of nanoparticles and carbon nanotubes and the development of nanosensors.

The Accreditation Agency for Research, Development, and Innovation Technology (AIDIT), is a joint collaboration between the Polytechnic Universities of Madrid and Catalonia and has the vision of becoming a point

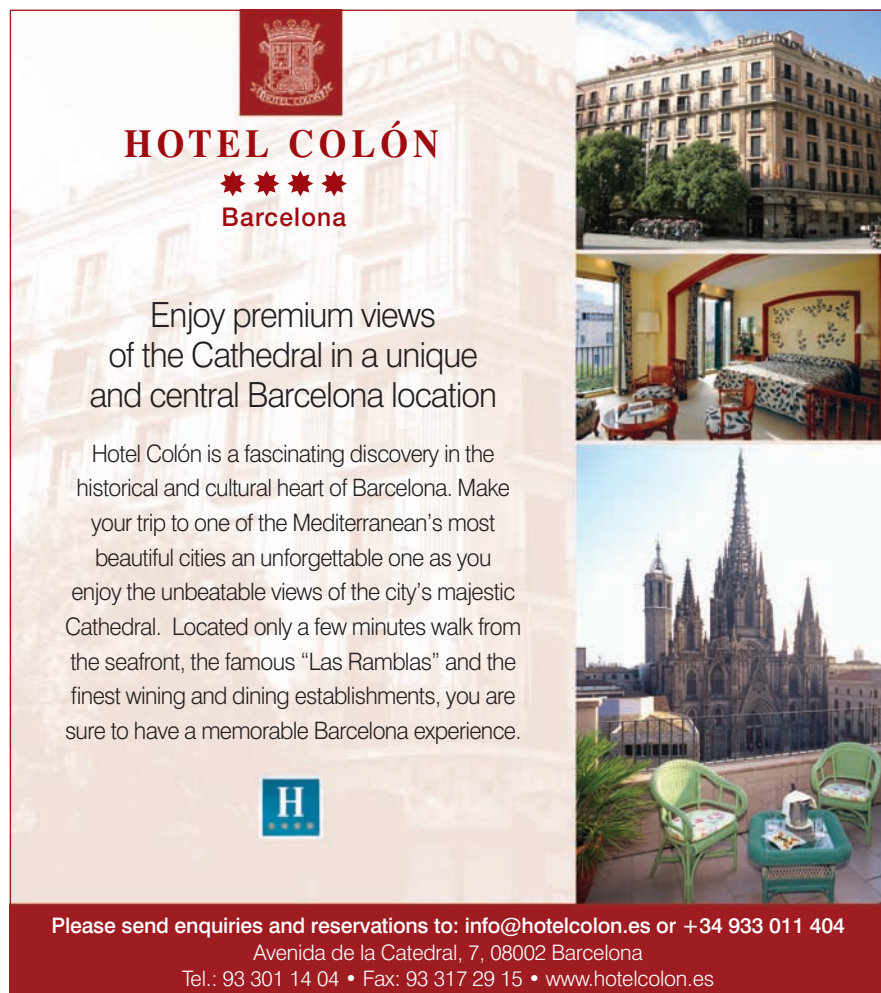
technical and economical viability of RDI projects carried out by companies of any sector, establishing parameters of excellence, and stating an independent and highly qualified opinion through a certification process. Anna Maria Sánchez, AIDIT director-general, says: "The scientific and technological capacity exists in Catalonia, but to survive the current crisis, companies must use all the management and financial tools at their disposal to move ahead."

## U.S. visitors spoilt for choice

Rich in history, culture, and with a great climate and diverse landscape, it is not just business executives and entrepreneurs who continue to arrive in Catalonia in ever greater numbers. Tourist figures remain solid with more than 25 million passengers passing through Barcelona's international airport in 2008, and the two smaller airports of Girona and Reus are also increasingly busy. The past decade has seen a sharp rise in the number of airlines flying to the region, with low-cost operators bringing a steady supply of year-round visitors.

Nearly 15 million tourists visited Catalonia in 2008—out of the 59 million people who visited Spain that year—and had the choice of around 3,000 hotels and guesthouses, as well as thousands of rental apartments, and campsites.

Of that impressive total, more than 520,000 Americans enjoyed the sights and sounds of cosmopolitan Barcelona, sampling the delights of its famous Ramblas, Plaça Catalunya, attractive quayside, and historic



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Catalonia's stunning coastline offers visitors an array of pristine beaches and coves to enjoy and explore.

Gothic Quarter. The city's many World Heritage sites include the beautiful and colorful Park Güell, Gaudí's incredible Sagrada Família—Spain's most visited landmark—and other architectural gems such as Casa Vicens, Casa Batlló, and Palau Güell.

Barcelona's tree-lined boulevards are dotted with bustling cafés and restaurants offering visitors a relaxing break among all the unique Roman remains, medieval districts, and beautiful examples of Modernisme and avant-garde art from the 20th century.

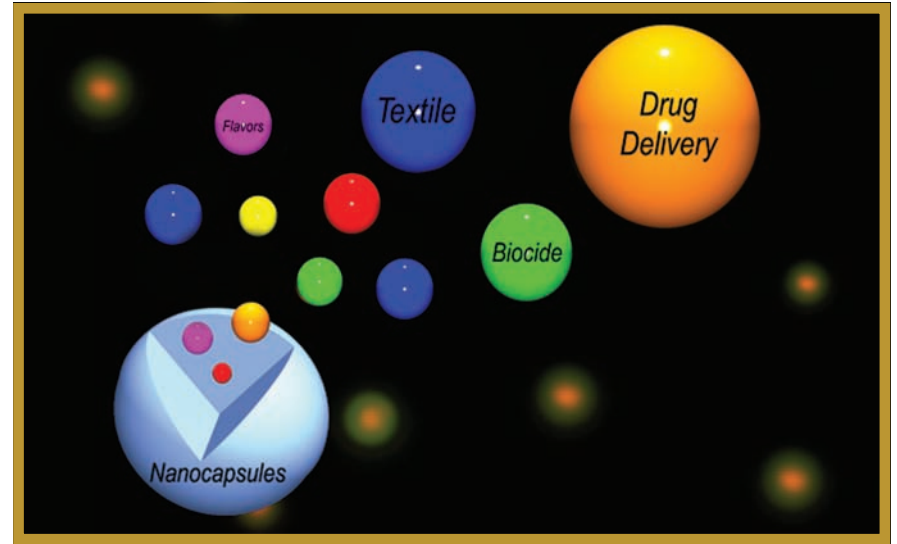
A key driver of the local economy, tourism generates around 11% of Catalonia's GDP and provides work for more than 450,000 people. Most visitors arrive by air, but excellent road and rail networks and facilities allow quick and easy access to surrounding areas and its 360 miles of coastline. Barcelona's port is also a popular arrival and destination point thanks to all the cruise liners that dock throughout the year.

"We are very satisfied with the number of tourists from the U.S. that visit Barcelona and how the tourism sector is evolving," says Barcelona's Mayor, Jordi

Hereu. "Barcelona is an important stop-off point for cruises, which strengthens the importance of our airport. The link between the port and the airport is vital and many cruise passengers who arrive in the city enjoy pleasant days exploring it before returning to their home country. People want to enjoy the city and its personality. I believe it is the best city in the world."

Indeed, the region's artistic and cultural heritage continues to draw people from all over the world, with its splendid range of art galleries, palaces, theaters, and museums meeting the needs of those interested in Catalan culture. The stunning Palau de la Música, situated in the center of Barcelona, is highly regarded for its world-class shows and beautifully crafted interior.

Fashion-conscious visitors will find Barcelona's picturesque streets filled with shops and stores selling the latest designer fashions and hi-tech consumer goods, with the city's most exclusive stores situated amid the long avenues and modern architecture around the Passeig de Gràcia and the Rambla de Catalunya. On different days of the



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week, there is a selection of street markets and festivals offering visitors countless opportunities to purchase unique objects.

Undoubtedly one of Catalonia's best attributes is its fantastic selection of mouthwatering cuisine. In Barcelona alone, there are hundreds of restaurants, eateries, food outlets, and snack bars where visitors can enjoy traditional local dishes, or sample authentic foreign food from around the globe.

Catalonia is also home to some of Spain's best wine-makers, including such well-known names as Freixenet and Torres. Wines produced in the Penedés region are considered by many to be as good as the more high-profile Riojas, as well as being lighter on the wallet.

Active-minded individuals will discover a wide range of activities and adventure sports available such as white-water

rafting and mountain-biking, as well as dozens of challenging golf courses. Tucked away in the Catalan Pyrenees are numerous ski resorts, such as Baqueira-Beret, whose most famous guests include the Spanish Royal family.

A couple of hours north of Barcelona, the Sanctuary of Núria offers stunning views of surrounding mountains, valleys, and a man-made boating lake. Other outdoor pursuits include paragliding and kayaking. Art lovers can also enjoy the remarkable surrealist works of acclaimed artist, Salvador Dalí at his museum in Figueres, just an hour and a half away from Barcelona.

Pulsating festivals and fiestas featuring music, dance, and even fire, form another important part of the region's activities, with colorful processions dancing their way through the streets of Catalonia's towns and cities.

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Offering elegantly and attractively designed public areas, function rooms equipped with the latest technology and spacious guest-rooms designed for maximum comfort.

Occupying one of Barcelona's most prominent addresses, Hotel Condes de Barcelona is positioned in two nineteenth-century Modernista mansions, carefully restored to offer maximum comfort, the best in contemporary design, and cutting-edge technology.

The independent, four-star hotel in Passeig de Gràcia, in the heart of Modernista Barcelona and opposite Gaudí's famous La Pedrera, has 235 rooms, swimming pools, a fitness center, on-site parking, and avant-garde gastronomy.

"We are the only four-star hotel in Passeig de Gràcia and have many corporate clients," says Albert Labastida, director of Hotel Condes de Barcelona. "Our most important markets are North America and Britain. We also have many French clients and are looking to attract more international guests from Central and Latin America countries."

Meanwhile, with terrific views of the city's Gothic cathedral, the 142-bedroom Hotel Colón offers guests luxury accommodation in beautiful surroundings in the center of the

historic Gothic quarter. Visitors can take advantage of its ideal location by strolling down beautiful boulevards to Plaça Catalunya and the Port, while business travelers can attend events and presentations in its two large meetings rooms. Its smaller, sister hotel—the Regencia Colón—is close by.

"Hotel Colón is a very traditional hotel and we aim to attract those travelers who are looking for a more unique experience in Europe in an establishment that is not connected to one of the large chains," explains hotel director, Juan Carlos Labalsa.

"Our main clients are travelers from the U.S., who comprise 25% of our guests. Around 85% of our guests are tourists, and the rest are here on business. Many of our guests stay here before or after their cruises. We have always had a very clear strategy that comes from us dealing with traditional tour operators, and we are also attracting a lot of guests directly via the Internet."

Located next to the visually-striking Agbar Tower, Hotel Silken Diagonal is one of Barcelona's newest and most

eye-catching hotels thanks to its façade of black and white contrasts. Its modern style is clearly illustrated by its trendy interior design, while its curved design and cool furniture and colors are a world away from traditional hotels. Designed by famous Catalan architect Juli Capella—and having only opened its doors in late 2004—its 240 rooms feature the latest technology, while its

**"Barcelona is a very fashionable city and the cruise capital of the Mediterranean."**

rooftop pool and terrace afford visitors stunning views of the city.

"Barcelona is a very important departure and arrival point for cruises around the Mediterranean and we have lots of guests coming and going every day," says Hotel Silken Diagonal director, Lorenzo Valls. "We visit Miami ourselves two to three times a year to negotiate with companies, as well as cruise operators. Our location in Barcelona's technology center means we attract a

lot of business people during the week. There is a lot of innovation and design in Barcelona and it has a lot to offer."

"Catalonia has a diverse geography and in just a few hours you can travel from the ski slopes to the beaches," adds the Generalitat's Vice-President Carod-Rovira. "Barcelona is a very fashionable city and has become the cruise capital of the Mediterranean. All of these

factors are complementing Catalonia's natural beauty and resulting in the region becoming Spain's most popular tourist and investment destination for Americans."

With so much to offer investors, Catalonia is perfectly positioned to take advantage of all the business and commercial opportunities certain to arrive in the future, while Barcelona, Europe's fourth-visited city, reinforces its image as the ideal tourist destination. **P**

## Costa Rica's Institute of Ocular Surgery is a world-class point of reference

Eye surgery is another increasingly popular target for medical tourists and one of Costa Rica's most important centers is the Institute of Ocular Surgery (ICO). The eye surgery clinic is equipped with world-class facilities, and surgery costs a fraction of what it does in the U.S. As the ICO's medical director, Dr. David Flikier, explains, "Medical insurance policies in the U.S. do not generally cover the costs of eye or cosmetic surgery unless customers pay a premium. As the cost in the U.S. increases, Costa Rica becomes more

attractive. The costs of modern eye surgery can reach U.S.\$3,000 per eye in the U.S. compared to between U.S.\$750 to U.S.\$900 in Costa Rica."

Dr. Flikier trained at the prestigious Barraquer Institute of America in Colombia, and was lucky enough to be nominated Chief of Residence, which allowed him to learn from a closer perspective the outstanding knowledge of Dr. José Ignacio Barraquer, widely revered as a pioneer in refractive surgery (the surgical correction of short- and far-sightedness, and astigmatism.)

Modern techniques in this field today, such as Lasik surgery, are based on his original idea. "I had the honor of studying with Dr. Barraquer, and his children Francisco and Carmen Barraquer Coll, and to have seen during my studies the transition to laser surgery, where the procedure became more precise, repeatable, reliable and simple, giving a large number of eye surgeons around the world access to this technology," Dr. Flikier says. The doctor returned to Costa Rica, and dedicated himself to performing

eye surgeries, starting his own clinic, the ICO, at the tender age of 27.

Today, the ICO is a point of reference for eye care in Costa Rica. As well as performing the above-mentioned laser corrections and major surgeries, that include cataracts, glaucoma and corneal transplants, ICO also offers eye examinations and contact lens fittings. "Eye surgeons from all over the country turn to our clinic to rent modern equipment for diagnosis and treatment, such as the Excimer laser for the refractive surgery," Dr. Flikier says.

As well as the lower costs, there are other benefits in choosing the ICO for surgery. "It is relatively close to the States, the services are high quality, and the patients return very satisfied," Dr. Flikier says. "They can also enjoy recovering in relaxed surroundings, and take advantage of Costa Rica's tourist attractions."

Due to its impressive growth and reputation, the clinic is now slated for expansion. "In the last two years, we have received proposals to build a new hospital



Instituto de Cirugía Ocular, Refractive Surgery San José, Costa Rica

exclusively for medical tourists," Dr. Flikier explains. "This shows the interest from investors and the predicted increase in arrivals of patients from overseas. We would be extremely interested in associating with a foreign company, and are currently in the midst of analyzing what we need to do to make this a reality."

### INSTITUTE OF OCULAR SURGERY

Lasik eye surgery to correct vision problems such as Myopia (Nearsightedness), Hyperopia (Farsightedness) and Astigmatism with customized wave front techniques. Cataract Surgery with multifocal intraocular lens implants.

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