



COMPASS

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THROUGH CULTURE

REUS - SPAIN



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THE CITY

Reus is a city which is located in the region of Catalonia, Spain. Approximately 110 kilometers in the southwest direction from Barcelona. It is said that the name of the city was first mentioned as early as in the 13th century. However, its commercial life did not commence until 1750 when an English settlement was established there.

When it comes to the etymology of the name, there are two theories. One of them says that it comes from a Latin term which was used to refer to prisoners. Meanwhile the other one says that it comes from a Celtic word and denotes the crossing of roads. The name is included in a saying “Reus, Paris, London” as in the past these three cities would set the prices of liquor.

During the Spanish Civil War Reus was one of the most bombarded cities in Catalonia. Actually, if one were to order cities taking the scale of bombing into consideration, it is said that Reus would take third place.

Although the majority of people think of Barcelona when they hear the name “Antoni Gaudí,” the truth is that he was born in Reus. That is why, one of the main reasons to visit the city is to take a stroll through the same streets that the architect would use in his childhood and adolescence. When visiting the church, you can climb up the stairs to reach its octagonal bell tower from where the view over the Costa Dorada can be admired. Thanks to such an experience of visiting the city of Gaudí’s childhood, you can get a grasp of his background which in turn can enhance your understanding of his works. When it comes to learning about his origins, visiting Gaudí Centre is highly recommended.



THE CITY

The centre consists of a great number of touchable models of his works as well as audiovisual and interactive attractions which explain his life and the logic behind his designs. Apart from visiting Gaudí-related monuments, it is also worth walking down the streets of the city since Reus forms a part of “Réseau Art Nouveau Network” which is a network of “towns with the most important modernist heritage in Europe.” The number of modernist buildings which are still standing to this day in the city goes beyond 30. Here are some examples of the most prominent modernist buildings:

- **Pere Mata** – a psychiatric hospital designed by Domènech and Montaner which dates back to the 19th century and is said to be the crucial element of the Modernist Route. What is more, it belongs to the Cultural Property of National Interest.
- **Casa Navàs** – the most prominent and most important modernist building in Reus whose majority of features have been maintained untouched and in the original state, for instance, the columns, decorative elements on the first floor, arcades on the main façade, and many more. The building was designed by Domènech i Montaner who was asked to do so by Navàs family. The building is located in Plaça del Mercadal.
- **Casa Rull** is a building that was designed in 1900 by the same architect who designed both Pere Mata Institute as well as Casa Navàs, i.e. Lluís Domènech i Montaner. Other stunning places to see include: the Reus Town Hall located in Plaça del Mercadal, Plaça de Prim with the monument of Juan Prim, the St. Pere church, St. Joan Baptista church, and Bofarull Palace.



THE NATURE

In Reus you can relax surrounded by nature in two parks: Parc Sant Jordi and Parc de la Misericordia. Since Reus is the natal city of Gaudí, in Parc Sant Jordi one can see beautiful fountains or benches which were designed in the style of the famous artist. Parc de la Misericordia is located next to Santuari de Misericordia which is a Catholic church. In the park there are also attractions which can be enjoyed by kids such as slides, swings and even a mini train.

Although in Reus itself one cannot find mountains, beaches, forests, or vast lands of nature, the town is located in close proximity to beaches in Tarragona (14km away), Cambrils (19 km away), and Salou (9km away). What is more, the nearby mountains can be found within more or less 40 kilometers, for example in Siurana reservoir.

THE TRADITIONS

The most important tradition in Reus is the tronada, a festive pyrotechnic that dates back to the ancient custom of firing firearms to announce a festival or celebrate certain situations. Currently, it consists of a gunpowder trace on the tiles of the Plaza del Mercadal, where about thirty pieces called machos or mortars are heard at intervals, as well as thunder. The gunpowder draws a square around the square, from in front of the Town Hall to almost its starting point. On the last piece there is a square that contains different motifs, depending on the design of the pyrotechnician. The thunders, made of iron, and currently made of steel, are prepared manually, with black powder and mine powder, and atacona with rajolí, or brick powder, because the powder explodes inside the artifact and makes the characteristic sound that has. Although the guilds disappeared during the 19th century, the tronada remained.



THE TRADITIONS

It was used in the Festa Major, but also in neighborhood festivals, religious celebrations and often in civil celebrations. For example, the "happy part of Queen Elizabeth II" (1852) and the proclamation of civil marriage in Reus (1870). And they were also lit for Carnival, at the time of the arrival of King Carnestoltes. From 1883 they were integrated into the October festivals of the city.

In the twentieth century we find them in the middle of the Fiesta Mayor, in variable numbers, up to five, and in the celebrations of the Virgin of Mercy, as the canonical coronation of 1904. Today the Tronada is held only four times a year, and all four times celebrate the main festival of Reus: Sant Pere (Saint Peter), the patron saint of Reus.

The city of Reus does not let itself go and celebrates not just one festival, but two. One is the great feast of Sant Pere (June 29) and the other is the small feast of Our Lady of Mercy (September 25). This feast, like that of Sant Pere, is accompanied by fireworks, but not by the tronada. In addition, the great feast of Reus does not lack festive elements. Such festive elements include: giants and nanos (smaller giants) and groups that represent traditional dances, for instance, Baile de Palos, which is danced in circles by boys and girls who hit wooden sticks. Another element of festivities is called correfoc which consists in a street show in which people dressed up as devils carry all kinds of pyrotechnic elements and the public interacts and dances with them. Yet, the human towers, which are called Castellers, comprise the most impressive part of all celebrations. As the name suggests, they consist of towers built by the people who climb them. The motto of the Castellers is "strength, balance, courage and attention".



THE TRADITIONS

The human towers, originally from the province of Tarragona (province of Reus), received worldwide recognition in 2010 when UNESCO recognized them as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. As you can see, Reus is a city dedicated to culture. For this reason, various cultural events are held throughout the year, such as the Trapezi Circus Festival, which has been held in the month of May since 1997. Since then, some of the main stages of the life of the city are filled with all kinds of show business professionals, whether they are malavarista, actors, clowns or acrobats. There is also the COS festival which fills the streets of the city with dance and theatre. In this city were born great personalities such as Roseta Mauri, dancer, muse and inspirer of many impressionist artists. Her birth in the city has led to the creation of various dance events that are held every two years at the Fortuny Theater in the city, such as an international dance award.



FLAVOURS OF REUS

The typical flavours of Reus include:

- Vermouth
- Plim
- Masclet
- Coca de cerezas
- Menjar blanc
- Hazelnut

Vermouth is said to form an important part of the history of Reus. Thus, Reus is known as the city of vermouth. Although the type of alcohol originated in Italy, Reus has vast experience in the production of the alcohol. The brands that originated in Reus include Miró, Yzaguirre and Iris. Reus is also a home to a Museum of Vermouth where one can see a collection made out of 6000 of items related to the type of alcohol. Apart from vermouth, Reus is also known for the production of hazelnut as well as a fizzy drink called Plim which was invented in 1928.

Masclet is drunk in Reus particularly during the most important festivities: Festa Major as well as the Festes de Misericordia. Masclet is a drink which is a mix of two drinks which are typical to the city of Reus: vermouth and Plim. When it comes to food, Menjar blanc is typically eaten as a dessert in Reus. There are various types of Menjar blanc, yet, the one eaten in Reus is an almond cream with a flavouring of solely rose water or both rose water and cinnamon. Another popular dessert is called Coca de cerezas. It is a bread-based pastry with cherries on top. It is typically eaten during the festivities of Coprus Christi, i.e. during May/June.



CULTURE & GREAT MINDS

As it has already been mentioned before, the famous architect Antoni Gaudí was born in Reus. Yet, he was not the only one. Popular and widely-recognized people from Reus include:

- **Marià Fortuny** – a painter who dealt in his works of art with topics of orientalism, history, and Spanish colonial expansion
- **Sergi Roberto** – a professional footballer who plays for the Spanish national team.
- **Andreu Buenafuente** - a late night show and radio host as well as a writer.
- **Aida Folch** – an actress that has appeared in more than twenty movies. The movies where she can be seen include: “I know who you are,” or “The Queen of Spain.”
- **Isaac Cuenca** – a professional footballer who represented Real Club Deportivo de La Coruña and Granada Club de Fútbol, S.A.D. in La Liga.
- **Santiago Esteva** – a swimmer who took part in Summer Olympics in 1968 and 1976.
- **Antonio de Bofarull** – a historian, poet, and novelist. He wrote the first historical novel in Catalan titled “L'orfeneta de Menargues” which was later translated into Spanish.

Reus is a cultural centre with a lot of museums such as the Salvador Vilaseca's archeologic museum or a museum of art and history Reus. Moreover, there are two theatres: Teatre Bartrina and Teatre Fortuny, one cinema, and a few public libraries.



THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

Since Reus is located in Catalonia, there are two official languages used in the city: Spanish and Catalan.

Catalan is not only the official language of Catalonia but also of the Valencian Community and the Balearic Islands. Moreover, it is also spoken outside of Spain: it is the official language of Andorra, it holds a semi-official status in Alghero (Italy), and it is also used in the Pyrénées-Orientales (France).

In 1861 Catalan was divided by Manuel Milà i Fontanals into the eastern and the Western blocks. The dialect of Catalan that is spoken in Reus belongs to the eastern block and is called “Català tarragoní.” The dialects are characterized by differences on phonetic as well as lexical levels, for example, the dialect used in Reus utilizes moresc instead of blat de moro (sweet corn); xiquet/a instead of nen/a or noi/a (boy/girl); or reixos instead of reis (kings); etc.



RESOURCES

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