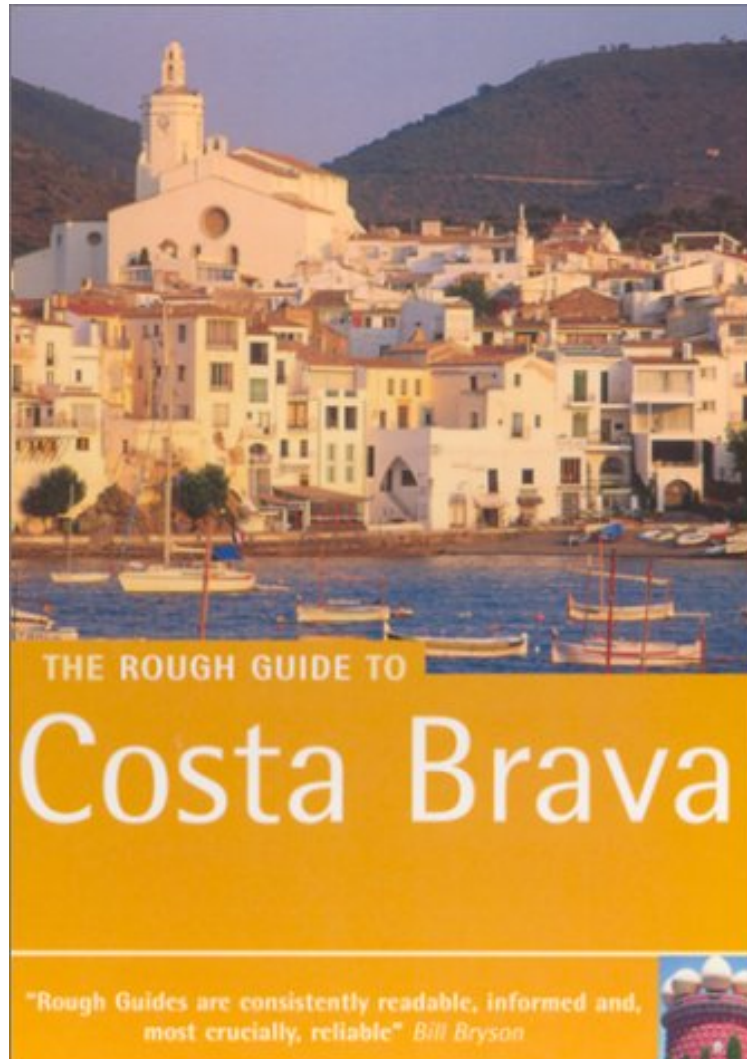


(Download) The Rough Guide to Costa Brava

The Rough Guide to Costa Brava

Chris Lloyd

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Chris Lloyd : The Rough Guide to Costa Brava before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rough Guide to Costa Brava:

This title offers an insight into the less well-known towns and activites and a fresh take on the more famous pursuits in the Costa Brava. It includes a history of the region plus the many historic towns and sites worth a visit, coastal walks, the characteristics of each beach and secluded cove, and a taster of the area inland from the sea.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. WHERE TO GO Diversity characterizes the region's beauty. Capital of the province is Girona, a walled medieval enclave that has been fought over every century since it was founded. Coupled with its rich history is a thriving cultural scene and a municipal pride that is palpable in the lanes of its charming old quarter. Inland from Girona, an abrupt change in the terrain marks the volcanic region of La Garrotxa, a rolling, flowing landscape in the foothills of the Pyrenees, perfect for rambles through ancient beech woods into the craters of dormant volcanoes. The southernmost part of the coast, La Selva, was most affected by the tourist boom, and remains a place of tour buses and all-day English breakfasts. Despite that, the natural beauty of the area, marked by small coves interspersed with long sandy beaches, is still largely intact in parts and the towns themselves – especially historic Tossa de Mar – retain some charm beneath the tourist veneer. North from here, the coast is at its best. With one or two exceptions, the chic Baix Empordà never succumbed to the tourist boom. Here, electric-green pines cluster at the edge of crystalline turquoise coves that are perfect for swimming or snorkelling. Many well-heeled Catalans own second homes here, and the towns, including Palamós, Palafrugell and Begur, are a haven of sophisticated elegance, housing some of the finest restaurants and terrace bars anywhere in Spain. With enormous contrasts between the laid-back charm of Calella de Palafrugell and Tamariu, the lively chic of Platja d'Aro and the unspoilt splendour of Sa Tuna and Aiguablava, the one constant is an air of refined hedonism. Further north, the Alt Empordà has two markedly different areas. The southern part is dominated by the sweeping sands of the Golf de Roses, flanked at one extreme by the Classical ruins of Empúries and at the other by the full-on beach culture of Roses itself. A short distance inland lies the county town of Figueres, Dalí's home town and dominated by a museum dedicated to him. North of Roses, at the Cap de Creus headland, the scenery suddenly changes to become bleak and barren, where the few pines clinging on for dear life above grey-sand coves are bent almost double in the wind. The beautiful seafront village of Cadaqués is the main draw, very near Dalí's one-time waterfront residence, beyond which a string of attractive, little-developed coves reaches north along the corrugated coast to Portbou on the French border. Inland, the protected Serra de l'Albera offers a cool, green and peaceful mountain retreat from the coast. WHEN TO GO Peak season is July and August. Weather at this time is rarely uncomfortably hot, although the influence of the Pyrenees means that conditions can change suddenly. The main towns are full of people but, if you choose your spot carefully, you can still find yourself alone in a tiny cove or enjoying the views from a tranquil mountain-top. The coast is at its best between Easter and the end of June and then again during September, when temperatures aren't quite so high, the swimming is idyllic and the crowds either haven't arrived or have just left. Girona is perfect to visit any time of the year. Note that from October until Easter many hotels and services – especially in the more tourist-oriented coastal areas – close altogether.