

# A Most Unique Museum Hotel in the Heart of Barcelona, Spain

## Hostal L'Antic Espai

By **Wayne and Judy Bayliff**

Our goal was to stay in a cosmopolitan neighborhood very near Barcelona's most famous landmark, La Sagrada Familia.

We also wanted something "different," for our short visit to Barcelona. The Hotel L'Antic Espai more than met our expectations.

### **Blink and you could miss it**

The Hotel L'Antic Espai is situated on the busy Gran Via de les Cortes Catalanesa, but its tiny signage and unassuming doorway make it remarkably easy to miss.

The ten-room hotel occupies the second floor of a five story multi-use structure. Americans unaccustomed to vintage European settings might be put-off by the non-hotel like two-hundred year old point of entry -- but those with a sense of adventure will be rewarded.

The front entrance is a door within a wooden doorway as often seen in old Europe - maneuvering large pieces of luggage through the small opening can be a challenge.

### **More residential than commercial**

The old marble staircase leading to the hotel entrance on the upper floor indicates a long history of hard use, and the lodging's second floor entry resembles that of a manor house, not a busy inn.

### **The museum within**

Once inside, one is immediately taken by the extraordinary array of antiques and art. Each narrow hall is teeming with ceramic figurines and oil paintings. There are diverse works of art and period furniture throughout the hotel. Every available space is occupied with a treasure.

Because fragile art is everywhere, we rolled our luggage very carefully across the old decorative tiled floor, and over each antique inlaid threshold - lest we accidentally bump a prized artifact on the way to our guestroom.

Room number 107 is located in the rear of the hotel and away from the busy thoroughfare on which the hotel is situated. We were pleased to find a small sitting room adjacent to our bedroom, and a lovely veranda that we shared with neighboring guestrooms.

### **The colorful veranda**

Lush tropical foliage and cages of singing birds decorated the delightful veranda. There were two teak tables under a canvas awning with ample seating for all the guests able to access the outdoor space.

The veranda is perfect for a cozy evening libation by candlelight, or a place to don the hotel's comfortable robes and enjoy the simple ala carte breakfast available from the hotel's tiny kitchen.

### **A restaurant recommendation - but not what you might expect**

Only breakfast is available at the hotel, but there are many fabulous Catalan, Mediterranean, and Tapas restaurants in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, if you are like us, you sometimes have a desire for a specific type of food regardless of where you are in the world. That happened to us immediately after visiting and photographing the Sagrada Familia. We had a desire for (*of all things*) Chinese food.

Within one block of the famous cathedral, we found the Restaurante Chino - Casa Fong on Carrer de Sardenya. It

turned out to be one of the best family operated Chinese restaurants we have had the pleasure to patronize, ~~anywhere~~ hence the tip and high praise mentioned here. Unfortunately, Casa Fong does not have a website, but if you speak Mandarin or Spanish, you can call 93-457-30-60 for reservations when you arrive in Barcelona.

**A little about the [La Sagrada Familia](#) (The Church of the Holy Family)**

[http://www.sagradafamilia.cat/docs\\_instit/historia.php](http://www.sagradafamilia.cat/docs_instit/historia.php)

You have seen pictures of it on most generic travel posters featuring Spain. The strangely amorphous church is probably the most iconic landmark in all of Barcelona - and definitely worth a visit. The structure is the brainchild of the controversial architect, Antoni Gaudi.

Construction began in 1882, and the work was still not complete at the time of Gaudi's death in 1926. In fact, it is still incomplete. They hope to have the roof finished by 2011. The entire edifice is said to be *Art Nouveau* gone wild. We would agree.

**If you go**

The Hotel L'Antic Espai is centrally located in Barcelona and an easy taxi ride from either the airport or the cruise ship docks.

This hotel will have particular appeal to those looking for the unusual, and those who prefer local color in their accommodations. For more information check out their website at [www.lanticespai.com](http://www.lanticespai.com)

Happy travels!

