

Committed to Culture

Torroella de Montgrí i l'Estartit



Any del
Turisme Cultural

Torroella · l'Estartit · illes Medes
www.visitestartit.com



Published by:
 Department of Tourism
 Town Council of Torroella de Montgrí

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 Town Council of Torroella de Montgrí
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Torroella, a town of history and culture



Torroella de Montgrí-L'Estartit is one of Catalonia's major cultural destinations. Music and art blend with the numerous venues offered by its architectural heritage for cultural expression, in an ancient historic setting. The town's revenue from culture is the tenth highest of all Catalonia's municipalities.

Torroella de Montgrí-L'Estartit abounds with vestiges of the past and heritage that evoke the municipality's impressive history (the first recorded mention of the town dates from 888 AD). These include the castle on the Montgrí massif (built between 1294 and 1301 as a demonstration of the power of King James II of Aragon

to the counts of Empúries), and the Gothic church of Sant Genís (1209), which is visible from much of the Baix Ter region. A tour of Torroella takes visitors to the Plaça de la Vila and to the chapel of Sant Antoni, the cloister of the Augustinian convent (17th century), Palau Solterra (late 16th century, site of the Vila Casas Foundation), Casa Galibern (late 19th century, site of the Mascort Foundation), Palau lo Mirador (16th century), Torre de les Bruixes ('Witches' Tower') and the gateway of Santa Caterina (remains of the old medieval wall from the 14th and 15th centuries) and Can Quintana (16th century, site of the Museum of the Mediterranean), as well as other iconic buildings. In his work *El meu país* (My Country - 1958), the writer

"Torroella is a town with a lot of history. When walking along a street, one is often distracted by the exquisite refinement of a Gothic window".

Josep Pla, *El meu país* (1958), *Obra Completa*, Edicions Destino



Josep Pla, who was from the Baix Empordà region, stated that “Torroella is a town with a lot of history. When walking along a street, one is often distracted by the exquisite refinement of a Gothic window”.

III Traditional fairs and festivals

The municipality has a rich tradition of fairs and festivals that have survived over the centuries. One major event is Saint Andrew’s Fair, which takes place on the last weekend of November. This is the oldest such fair to be held in Catalonia.



Calendar of traditional Festivals

Torroella de Montgrí

- Patron saint’s day, Saint Genesius | 25 August
- Festival of Saint Catherine | 25 November
- Saint Andrew’s Fair | Last weekend in November

L'Estartit

- Saint John’s Eve | 23 June
- Festival of Our Lady of Mount Carmel | 16 July
- Festival of Saint Anna | 26 July
- Festival of Saint Lucy | 13 December

The value of the heritage

Sightseeing itinerary

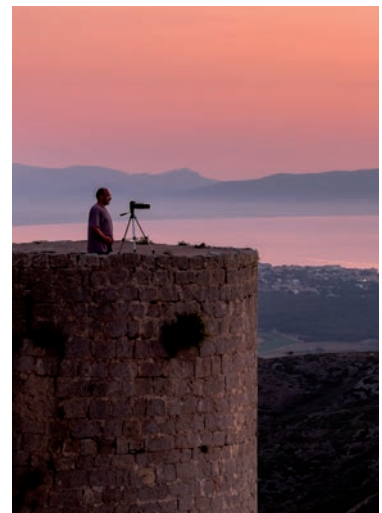


Torroella de Montgrí, in the foothills of the Montgrí massif, evokes history through the network of the streets of its old quarter, where there are some palaces and stately homes from the 14th to the 17th centuries that recall the period of splendour of the town. Also the church of Sant Genís and other buildings of religious origin in accordance with a magnificent itinerary of discovery of the cultural and architectural heritage of the town. A route that does not end here, but extends to the coastal town of L'Estartit, which originated in the 16th century with the establishment of the first fishermen around the old hermitage on which the current parochial church of Santa Anna was built.



The municipality's cultural and architectural heritage

- ≡ **Montgrí castle** (1294-1301)
- ≡ **Church of Sant Genís** (1209)
- ≡ **Plaça de la Vila and chapel of Sant Antoni** (13th century)
- ≡ **Cloister of the Augustinian convent** (18th century)
- ≡ **Palau Solterra - Vila Casas Foundation** (14th century)
- ≡ **Casa Galibern - Mascort Foundation** (19th century)
- ≡ **Palau lo Mirador** (14th century)
- ≡ **Can Quintana - Museum of the Mediterranean** (16th century)
- ≡ **Gateway of Santa Caterina and Torre de les Bruixes** (14th-15th century wall)
- ≡ **Carrer de l'Església** (13th century)
- ≡ **Carrer Major** (s. XIII)
- ≡ **Historical houses: Casa Bataller** (16th-17th centuries), **Casa Saguer** (16th-17th centuries), **Casa Comas** (19th century)
- ≡ **Underground water channel** (14th century)
- ≡ **Hermitage of Santa Caterina** (s. XIV - XV) **and isolated chapels**
- ≡ **Hermitage of Santa Maria de Palau** (13th century) **and isolated chapels**
- ≡ **Church of Santa Anna, L'Estartit** (reconstructed in 1920)
- ≡ **Torre Morratxa, Torre Montgó and fortified farmhouses in the coastal strip - Quintaneta, Mas Ral, Torre Begura, Torre Ferrana, Torre Gran, Torre Martina, Torre Ponça** (17th-18th centuries)
- ≡ **Remains of a Napoleonic fort on the Medes Islands** (18th century)



Tradition and identity

A town where music is a way of life



The municipality has a long musical tradition that dates from the Middle Ages: from the first group of church musicians and singers, documented in the 14th century, to today's range of different events. These include the Torroella International Music Festival, which was first held in 1981 and is now fully established as a benchmark for classical music.

"Torroella de Montgrí is a town of musicians." This popular belief has been clearly demonstrated throughout the town's history. Records of the first

first group, the Torroella Chapel of Music, which was associated with church worship, date back to the 14th century. This yielded musicians who later established historical groups of singers and instrumentalists: Benet Julià, Anselm Viola, Vicenç Bou, Josep Costa, Josep Ferrer, Pere Blasi, Pep Ventura, etc., all of whom inspired new generations of musicians, composers and singers, who have prolonged and enhanced the town's musical pedigree. Its wealth of music has been channelled through different festivals and a variety of disciplines and venues. The best-known event is the International Music Festival (July and August), which

was established in 1981 and has been held without fail ever since (the Government of Catalonia awarded it Festival of Cultural Interest status and its promoter received the National Prize for Music in 1992). L'Estartit Jazz Festival, which was first held in 2014, also takes place during the months of July and August. This event gave rise to the Torroella Fringe Festival at which young musicians offer free concerts. Ítaca, the Baix Empordà's multidisciplinary cultural festival, also comes to Torroella de Montgrí every year, while the Mediterranean Music Festival, which first took place in 2002, brings to the town the music and dance of countries associated with the Mediterranean's cultural wealth. A continuous stream of one-off events in different genres and from diverse origins rounds off the municipality's artistic panorama.



||| Joventuts Musicals

Joventuts Musicals of Torroella organisation was established in 1980, on a not-for-profit basis. Since then it has striven to disseminate and encourage awareness of music, particularly classical music. The organisation is responsible for the success of the prestigious International Music Festival and other activities throughout the year such as the autumn and winter concert series.



||| Espai Ter, the auditorium of the Baix Ter region

The Espai Ter facility was inaugurated in 2013 and has some features that are unique both to the Girona region and to Catalonia as a whole. The auditorium operates in two core areas: culture, particularly music and the performing arts; and the promotion of the region through fairs, congresses and other events. Espai Ter, which has a capacity for 700 people and state-of-the-art technology and comfort, runs a regular programme that includes a range of disciplines such as music, theatre, magic and circus, addressed to a varied audience. It hosts performances in the International Music Festival, the International Magic Festival, the Xarxa de Músiques a Catalunya Concert Series and the Ítaca Festival, as well as a diverse theatre programme. Because of its modern features it is considered the auditorium of the Baix Ter region and is visited by around 30,000 spectators every year.



Diversity of tastes

A host of musical events

Torroella de Montgrí Music Festival

Hundreds of concerts and thousands of spectators have made this a benchmark classical music festival in Catalonia and Europe.

Since the Torroella de Montgrí Music Festival was established, it has offered recitals and concerts by hundreds of the best international classical performers and orchestras. The festival was first held in 1981 upon the initiative of Jeunesses Musicales of Torroella as a small series of concerts in the town's historic centre, the church of Sant Genís, the arcaded Gothic-Renaissance square and the former Convent of the Order of Saint Augustine. The popularity of its concert schedule has led to a yearly growth in the number of performances and venues. Nearly 500,000 spectators had attended the festival as of 2017. These types of events encourage interest in musical culture in the municipality, and this has led to the creation of numerous groups and services such as the Torroella de Montgrí School of Music.



Jazz l'Estartit

L'Estartit Jazz Festival was established in 2014 as a branch of the Torroella de Montgrí Music Festival. It offers an attractive programme the purpose of which is to promote jazz. The Medes Islands provide a spectacular backdrop to the festival, which hosts a range of concerts during July and August in different areas of jazz such as jam sessions, ragtime, blues and work songs.



Ítaca Festival

The Ítaca, Culture and Action Festival takes place in the months of May, June and July in different towns in the Empordà region, one of which is Torroella de Montgrí-L'Estartit. Every year since 2012 the town has hosted music and theatre performances and talks as part of the festival, which strives to champion quality yet affordable culture as something that is "not a luxury", but rather within everyone's grasp.

Fringe, young talent

The Fringe Festival has been held in Torroella de Montgrí and L'Estartit since 2014. It provides a stage for young musicians who are selected by a group of conservatoires, schools and organisations that collaborate with the International Festival. Specifically, these are the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, the Conservatori Superior de Música del Liceu of Barcelona, Berklee College of Music-Valencia Campus, Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama of London, Taller de Músics of Barcelona, and Deutscher Musikrat.

Anselm Viola Choir

The Anselm Viola Choir began in 1977 as a small parish choral society that accompanied church services and ceremonies. Over the years the choir extended its repertoire and in 1986 it adopted the name Anselm Viola Choir, as a tribute to the well-known 18th-century composer from Torroella. The choir has evolved to the point that it has become a benchmark for choral work and a promoter of events such as L'Empordà Canta. This festival was established in 2016 with a view to showcasing choral singing as part of Catalonia's popular and traditional cultural heritage.



International Magic Festival, a benchmark in southern Europe

FIMAG, the Torroella de Montgrí International Magic Festival, was first held in 2012 and since then has experienced a gradual growth in the number of artists, shows and venues.

The first Torroella de Montgrí International Magic Festival (FIMAG) was held in 2011. It was promoted by a newly established cultural association headed by Juli Carbó with a commitment to the revival of this artistic speciality, which is attracting an ever greater number of followers. Every year, the festival brings together over 50 prestigious artists from different countries who appear in more than 200 performances and at around twenty venues in the municipality.

It includes the International Grand Gala and the Young Magicians' Gala, the inaugural show, magic in the street and in shop windows, recreational activities, workshops, exhibitions, market and fair zones for professionals, and magic at night. Each year the festival attracts nearly 20,000 people, who enjoy different specialities ranging from traditional magic to new artistic performances associated with conjuring. The FIMAG programme is designed to make Torroella de Montgrí southern Europe's capital of magic.



||| Museum of the Mediterranean and Medes Centre

The Medes Centre, an innovative proposal

The Medes Centre is a new facility planned for the port of L'Estartit. Its main objective is to provide information about the Medes Islands and to make it easier for the different sections of the public to gain access to them, thus fostering interest in this natural site and its protection. Conceived in collaboration between the authorities responsible for the Natural Park and the private sector, the Centre will include an entertaining exhibition with high-quality innovative and interactive features. It will be the key reference point for publicising the Medes Islands and raising environmental awareness, focussing particularly on the marine environment, and will also organise educational programmes concerning the environmental and cultural features of the Natural Park's coastal area. It will operate both as the starting point for multiple activities for discovering the Park and as a centre for highlighting the history of L'Estartit, and the key importance of fishing and the

marine environment in the town's development. It will also coordinate projects to promote sustainable fishing initiatives.

In the specific field of tourism, it will coordinate the publicising and sale of tourism-related products and marine activities, acting as the starting point for discovering the Natural Park and for promoting the L'Estartit-Medes Islands Marine Resort.



Museum of the Mediterranean, a sea of culture

The Museum of the Mediterranean is a facility at which to discover and learn about people's relation with the Mediterranean. It is based both on the region of the Montgrí massif, the Baix Ter plain and the Medes Islands, and hands-on experience for adults and children alike that includes sounds, music, routes and audio-visuals. One of the museum's activities is the organisation of the Mediterranean Music Festival, which was first held in 2002. The festival, which is the only one of its kind in Catalonia and in the Mediterranean region as a whole, provides an opportunity to share different traditional experiences from the Mediterranean's musical culture. As well as the meetings, there is also the Cultural Island, which is a genuine Mediterranean market in which to fully enjoy local and guest cultures.



Local organisations and associations, cultural and traditional pedigree

Torroella de Mongrí-L'Estartit is home to numerous organisations and groups that keep different cultural, traditional and innovative expressions alive and see to the important task of maintaining and publicising what the municipality has to offer. These organisations also bring together members of the public with cultural interests. There are over a hundred registered organisations that include the Continuitat Sardana-dancing Group, the Association

of Friends of Photography of Torroella de Montgrí, the Grallers del Montgrí Popular Music Association, the Friends' Association of the 'Giants' and 'Big-Head' Festival Figures of Torroella de Montgrí, the Medes Montgrí Theatre Association, the Montgrí Association of Musical Theatre, the Torroellenc Cinema Club, the Colla Gegantera Xicu i Remei of L'Estartit, the Els Passerells Choral Society and Els Ducs del Foc firework runners.



Foundations and the promotion of art



Torroella is also land of painters, sculptors, writers and photographers. For this reason, private foundations and art galleries have established their headquarters in the municipality, promoting it with its exhibitions, together with the municipal galleries and the Mediterranean Museum.

III Commitment to culture

The authorities and organisations that promote culture in Torroella de Montgrí-L'Estartit are firmly pledged to ensuring that the municipality remains a stage for highly diverse cultural events. Its core commitments are as follows:

- ≡ Coordination of local policies to encourage and to disseminate the municipality's cultural and historical values
- ≡ Support for organisations and groups that keep the town's cultural tradition alive
- ≡ Initiatives that encourage public participation in the different expressions of culture
- ≡ Promotion of new musical and artistic expressions emerging from the municipality
- ≡ Maintenance of a network of facilities suitable for cultural expression

Support for cultural events already in progress and for initiatives that give them maximum publicity



Vila Casas Foundation - Palau Solterra

Since the year 2000, Palau Solterra has been home to the Vila Casas Foundation Museum of Contemporary Photography, where a permanent collection of over 200 photographs by artists from different parts of the world is on display. The mansion, which is an example of 15th-century civil architecture, was the traditional residence of the counts of Torroella de Montgrí. Throughout the year the museum holds travelling exhibitions by contemporary Catalan and foreign photographers who are closely associated with the local area, as well as monographic and group exhibitions by artists with a long professional career, both in Catalonia and internationally. The museum has been a benchmark for contemporary photography in Catalonia since the nineteen-sixties.

Mascort Foundation - Casa Galibern

The foundation was established by Ramon Mascort i Amigó, a lawyer, multi-faceted businessman and the patron of environmental conservation initiatives. The Mascort Foundation was set up in 2007 with different purposes in mind. These include the dissemination of historical knowledge, promotion and understanding of art, and support for the defence of nature. Casa Galibern, the foundation's headquarters, was built by Ramon Galibern Casanovas, Ramon Mascort's great-grandfather, upon returning from Brazil having made his fortune there. The building therefore features some Brazilian architectural influences. The foundation hosts exhibitions on history, art and nature, and has published different works on these subjects in relation to Torroella de Montgrí and other towns in Catalonia.

A complete network of exhibition sites and art galleries

Traç d'Art

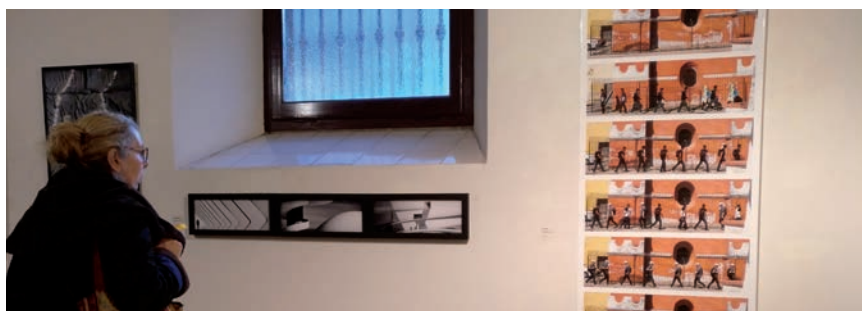
Located in L'Estartit, it exhibits works of contemporary figurative painting, both by well-known artists and young emerging talents.

Atrium Roca Sans

Located in the old Gothic-style Casa Quintana-Badia in the historic centre of Torroella, it exhibits the works of the visual artist Joan Carles Roca.

Municipal galleries

Exhibitions at the municipal galleries of the chapel of Sant Antoni, the Decentralised Municipal Institution of L'Estartit and the former Hospital.



“I like Torroella and what I like most of all before arriving there, from Pals, is the bridge over the River Ter, the view over the water from east to west and the elegant lushness of the great trees while the sleepy river flows slowly and winds along the white sandy bank (...)”

Josep Pla, *“El meu país”*



Further information on services and companies that offer activities in L'Estartit and Torroella de Montgrí:

L'Estartit Tourist Office:

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