


**English**



**Mercè  
'09**

**23 to 27  
September**

 Ajuntament de Barcelona

[www.bcn.cat/merce](http://www.bcn.cat/merce)

**Anyone who wants to see Barcelona at its very best and showing off its most festive side – avant-garde but traditional at the same time – will have the perfect opportunity at the Mercè Festival, when the city says farewell to the summer and celebrates the day of its co-patron. During the Mercè you can see everything from concerts to street entertainment, theatre, cinema, circus and dance, and you can also explore the roots of Catalan culture thanks to a programme of activities from the Dance of the Giants to the spectacular Fire Run. The programme includes a wide range of events, but these are some that are not to be missed.**

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## One city, two patrons

**The patron saint of Barcelona was originally Santa Eulàlia, whose remains rest in the crypt of Barcelona Cathedral. However when, in 1687, the city fell victim of a terrible plague, the people of Barcelona placed themselves in the hands of the Virgin of la Mercè who, according to tradition, managed to abate the outbreak. Ever since then, la Mercè and Santa Eulàlia have shared the patronage of Barcelona, and although each of them have their own popular festival days, it is the September festival that is celebrated most.**

## Tradition

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### ***The Opening Procession (Toc d'Inici)***

PLAÇA DE SANT JAUME  
Wednesday 23 / 7.45pm

The opening act of the Festival is a spectacle that comes from some of the most deep-rooted traditions and is a combination of the dance, music and festive imagery of Barcelona. The Inaugural procession provides the opening for an event full traditional of dances, figures and music such as the Minstrers del Camí Ral—a group of forty players of popular instruments that form a true symphonic orchestra of tradition. Don't miss them as they only play once a year!

### ***Fire Run (Correfoc)***

AVINGUDA FRANCESC CAMBÓ, VIA LAIETANA  
AND PLAÇA ANTONIO LÓPEZ  
Saturday 26 / 8.30pm

Fire and gunpowder are inseparable elements of the Mercè Festival and one of the most intense moments of the celebrations is the *Fire Run*. The people of Barcelona created their own festive inferno in a celebration that starts off from the Porta de l'Infern (Hell's Gateway). As it starts it gives way to a long line of followers dressed as devils and accompanied by dragons and other Fire Beasts, who are the protagonists of an impressive display of fireworks through the streets of Barcelona.

**Warning!**

### ***Enjoy this event with caution***

The Fire Run carries a certain risk of danger, so anyone who wants to experience it at close hand should know that there are a few essential basic precautions to be observed. Children tend to get scared, so it better to take them to the Little Devils' Fire Run event, or at least not stand with them in the front row. It is also advisable to cover up as much as possible: we recommend you wear a cap, a neckerchief, long sleeved cotton clothes (never synthetic), long trousers and even glasses where possible. If you want to take part, remember that they you be exposed to possible burns at all times and avoiding this depends only on you and the precautions that you take.

## ***Little Devils Fire Run***

VIA LAIETANA/MANRESA

Saturday 26 / 6.30pm

The kids also have their own fireworks party, but theirs is a specially designed fire run that takes place a short time before the adult event and where the explosions are gentler. This activity is especially recommended for families, as it allows them to experience the most traditional side of the Mercè Festival without too much of a fright. However, it should be pointed out that the explosions and fire are still part of the event and so care should be taken.

## ***Festival Morning***

Whoever finds themselves wandering through the streets of the Old Quarter of the city on 24th September, the day of the Mercè, will see the most traditional part of the celebrations, which start first thing in the morning:

### **8AM Pipers' Morning Call (Matinada de grallers)**

Groups of traditional musicians who circulate around the streets of the historic city from the Mercè Basilica to the Plaça Sant Jaume to wake up the residents and invite them to join the festival.

### **10AM Blunderbuss Gala (Galejada de Trabucaires)**

In the olden days, bandoleers paid homage to the Virgin of the Mercè by firing their blunderbusses into the air. Today the same thing is done by members of the special *trabucaires* groups that from an essential element of the festival. Avinguda de la Catedral

### **11AM Giants' Morning (Matí de gegants)**

After displaying their dances in the Plaça Sant Jaume, the giants take to the streets in a procession through the Old Quarter, starting from the Plaça Sant Jaume and ending in the Manning Courtyard.

### **12PM Authorities Procession (Seguici d'autoritats)**

The city authorities and some of the most prominent figures of Barcelona tradition (giants and beasts) walk the route between the Plaça de la Mercè and the Plaça Sant Jaume, where the Mayor of Barcelona appears on the balcony of the city hall. Then, the giants and the Eagle of the city perform a dance which has to be seen by anyone who loves tradition events (12.15pm).

## ***Human Castles and Sardanas (Castellers i sardanes)***

Two of the most genuine displays of Catalan culture are the human castles and Catalonia's popular national dance – the *sardana*.

### **Human Castles Day**

PLAÇA DE SANT JAUME

Thursday 24 / 12.30pm

All the *colles* or groups of human castles in the city meet at this part of the festival, which starts after the dance of the giants and the Eagle of the city.

## **Human Castles Festival**

**PLAÇA DE SANT JAUME**

Sunday 27 / 12pm

The Barcelona Castellers host this event which brings together some of the best *colles* of human castles in Catalonia. Remember that the *colles* have been building castles all summer and now, at the end of the season, they are on top form for this event.

## **Sardanas**

Catalonia's popular dance par excellence appears on several occasions during the festival. These are the main events:

Wednesday 23 / 7pm

**AVINGUDA DE LA CATEDRAL**

With the Sant Jordi-City of Barcelona music *Cobla*

Thursday 24 / 7pm

**MERCÈ BASILICA**

With the City of Girona music *Cobla*

Saturday 26 / 6pm

**PLAÇA SANT JAUME**

With the Prat del Llobregat music *Cobla*

Sunday, 27 / 11 h

**AVINGUDA DE LA CATEDRAL-PLA DE LA SEU**

Competition of Sardana groups and Sardana dancing with the Union of Sardana Groups.  
With the Mar i Cel music *Cobla*.

## ***The Mercè Parade (Cavalcada de la Mercè)***

Thursday 24 / 6pm-7.30pm

One of the highest points of the Mercè tradition, which this year pays homage to folklorist Joan Amades, Narcís Monturiol (who built the submarine *Ictineo* 150 years ago) and Idelfons Cerdà, the town planner who designed the *Eixample* area of Barcelona. Also taking part are the Giants of Barcelona, street entertainment groups and a good number of the festive beasts of the city.  
Route: Pelai, la Rambla, Ferran, Plaça Sant Jaume, Via Laietana, Joaquim Pou and Avinguda de la Catedral.

## ***Popular Culture***

The figures that make up Barcelona's festival imagery can be seen on display throughout the festival at different places in the city:

### **Barcelona Popular Procession**

**PALAU DE LA VIRREINA (LA RAMBLA, 99)**

23 to 27 September

### **Display of Giants of Barcelona**

**MANNING COURTYARD OF THE CASA DE LA CARITAT (MONTALEGRE, 7)**

13 to 23 September

### **Display of dragons and fire beasts**

**VESTIBULE OF BARCELONA CITY HALL (PL. SANT JAUME)**

19 to 26 September

## Fireworks

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### ***12th International Fireworks Festival***

For three nights, three firework displays from different places compete to design the best show of fireworks. The festival takes place at the Gas Jetty on Barceloneta Beach, in front of the Hospital del Mar.

Thursday 24 / 10.30pm

**Rozzi Fireworks (USA)**

Friday 25 / 10.30pm

**Focs d'artifici Europlá (Valencia)**

Saturday 26 / 10.30pm

**Fêtes et Feux (France)**

### ***Musical Fireworks Display***

AVINGUDA DE LA REINA MARIA CRISTINA

Sunday 27 / 10pm

This is the moment that everyone has been waiting for and it is also the end of the festival. One of the most established parts of the festival is the journey to Montjuïc to witness a spectacle of music and fireworks that turns the Barcelona sky into a sea of fire. This year the music is based on film soundtracks.

## Music

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### ***Festival (BAM)...***

**DIFFERENT STAGES**

All the latest, most avant-garde sounds can be heard in this festival that takes place on different stages around the city. This year's performances include artists and groups such as The Hives, Billie The Vision & The Dancers, Chinese rocker Cui Jian and great local bands like Manel and El Petit de Cal EriL.

### ***... other music***

But there is more music in the Mercè with noteworthy blues, world music, rock and other performances. This year's programme includes James Hunter and Janiva Magness, Anthony Joseph & The Spasm Band and Joe Bataan & Los Fulanos.

## Street Entertainment

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Thematic shows are offered on different sites for lovers of dance, theater, circus and other audiovisual shows.

## ***Dazzled!***

PLAÇA SANT JAUME  
23 to 27 September

The City Hall is magically transformed into a video-projection show that brings the stones of the building to life.

## ***Jazz, dragons and sustainability***

CIUTADELLA PARK  
23 to 27 September

One of the most popular parks in the city is the setting for three festivals in one! Here you can enjoy numerous activities related to **jazz music**, such as talks, workshops, concerts and film projections (from the 23rd to the 27th). You can also get to know more about **Asian culture** in the Asia Festival (Thursday 24th) or enjoy a range of family attractions and shows related to the **environment and sustainability** (from the 24rd to the 27th).

## ***Dance, the art of movement and much more***

FABRA & COATS  
24 to 27 September

Innovative dance proposals, daring theatrical creations and activities full of fun are the events that will be taking place in this old factory building, including the robot *Titan* of Cyberstein, the spectacular dances of the Collectif Jeu de Jambes and a choreographed work interpreted by...eight umbrellas!

## ***Circus Castle***

MONTJUÏC CASTLE  
24 to 27 September

The castle is a former army barracks but not long ago the people of the city reclaimed it as a place for festivities. There are circus tents installed there where clowns, acrobats, magicians and trapeze artists will leave us open mouthed. Ideal for a family outing.

## ***Barcelona looks to the sea***

MARITIME MUSEUM/PORTAL DE LA PAU/RAMBLA DEL RAVAL  
23 to 27 September

You can see the best of Mediterranean Barcelona in a series of events at the Maritime Museum, in the beautiful Gothic buildings of the medieval shipyard. There will be lots of family activities related to the sea as well as others about Istanbul, which is this year's guest city. Anyone who wants to hear traditional maritime music should go to listen to the habaneras being sung at the Portal de la Pau.

## ***An open-air theatre***

GREC THEATRE  
24 to 27 September

The Greek Theatre is the central venue for a highly established summer arts festival in the city. This year it is also taking part in the Mercè celebrations with a programme that includes dance events such as breakdancing by Los Vivancos, contemporary dance, flamenco and much more. Also, in homage to the folklorist Joan Amades there is *Els jocs d'en Joan Amades*. There will be family concerts by the Municipal Band, theatre entertainment and a jazz-inspired concert from the Rebirth Brass Band of New Orleans.

## From the Eixample to Istanbul

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### *The year of Ildefons Cerdà*

It was exactly 150 years ago that the Cerdà Plan for the extension of the city of Barcelona was approved. This vast urban operation involved the tearing down of the old walls that were corseting the city and the definitive expansion or *eixample* of the city. The urban plan, which was an example of modernity and functionality, was designed by engineer Idelfons Cerdà, to whom this year's Mercè Festival pays homage with a host of events from family activities in the interior courtyards to large shows such as *ScanGirl*, *Floten tecles* and *Spheres*, which will take place in different parts of the Eixample neighbourhood.

### *Istanbul, guest city*

This Turkish city, which will be the European Capital of Culture in 2010, offers us a taste of its cultural life in a series of events that can be enjoyed at venues throughout the festival, but are based at the Maritime Museum. You can see events such as dance and musical performances, Turkish shadow theatre shows (*karagöz*), art exhibitions and cinema projections related to this city that bridges Europe and the East.

## Festival Museums

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Many of the museums and other cultural installations in the city will be opening their doors for free on Thursday 24th September, the day of the Mercè, and organising activities throughout the festival week. These are the museums taking part:

Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona  
(Barcelona Photographic Archive)

CaixaForum

Casa Amatller

CCCB

Col·lecció de Carrosses

Fúnebres

(Collection of Funeral Carriages)

CosmoCaixa

Disseny Hub Barcelona (DHUB)

Fundació Foto Colectania

(Colectania Photo Foundation)

Fundació Joan Miró

(Joan Miró Foundation)

La Capella

La Virreina. Centre de la

Imatge

(La Virreina. Image Centre)

Museu d'Arqueologia  
(Archaeology Museum)

Museu d'Art Contemporani de  
Barcelona (MACBA) (Barcelona  
Contemporary Art Museum)

Museu de Ceràmica  
(Ceramics Museum)

Museu d'Història de Barcelona  
(Museum of the History of Barcelona)

Museu de la Música  
(Music Museum)

Museu Etnològic  
(Ethnological Museum)

Museu Frederic Marès  
(Frederic Marès Museum)

Museu Picasso  
(Picasso Museum)

Palau Güell

Poble Espanyol  
(Spanish Village)

**Please note!**

These are just some of the events in Mercè'09 but there are much more that appear in the complete Festival programme..

## **More information:**


**www.bcn.cat/merce**

**www.bcn.cat/canalcultura**

### **BY TELEPHONE**

Call 010 from 8am to 1pm (between Wednesday 23rd and Saturday 26th September) or from Monday to Friday from 8am to 12am (other days).

(€0.45 call set-up fee plus €0.06 per minute calculated in seconds.)

 If you would like information for anyone with hearing difficulties, please call 93 486 00 98

### **INFORMATION OFFICES**

- Cultural Information Office in the Palau de la Virreina (Rambla, 99) from Monday to Sunday 10am to 8pm.
- Tourist Information Offices in the Plaça Sant Jaume and Plaça Catalunya.

