



Tarragona Top Sights

By Jackie De Burca

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1. TARRAGONA CATHEDRAL

This magnificent Cathedral was declared to be a National monument in 1905. In the year 1171 construction began, and as is often the case, the site chosen had already been home to other spiritual buildings, such as a Roman Temple, a Moorish Mosque and a Visigothic Cathedral. Today the Cathedral of Santa Tecla looms over the old quarter majestically in the region's typical sandstone, with its emblematic soaring entrance and its façade's rose coloured window.

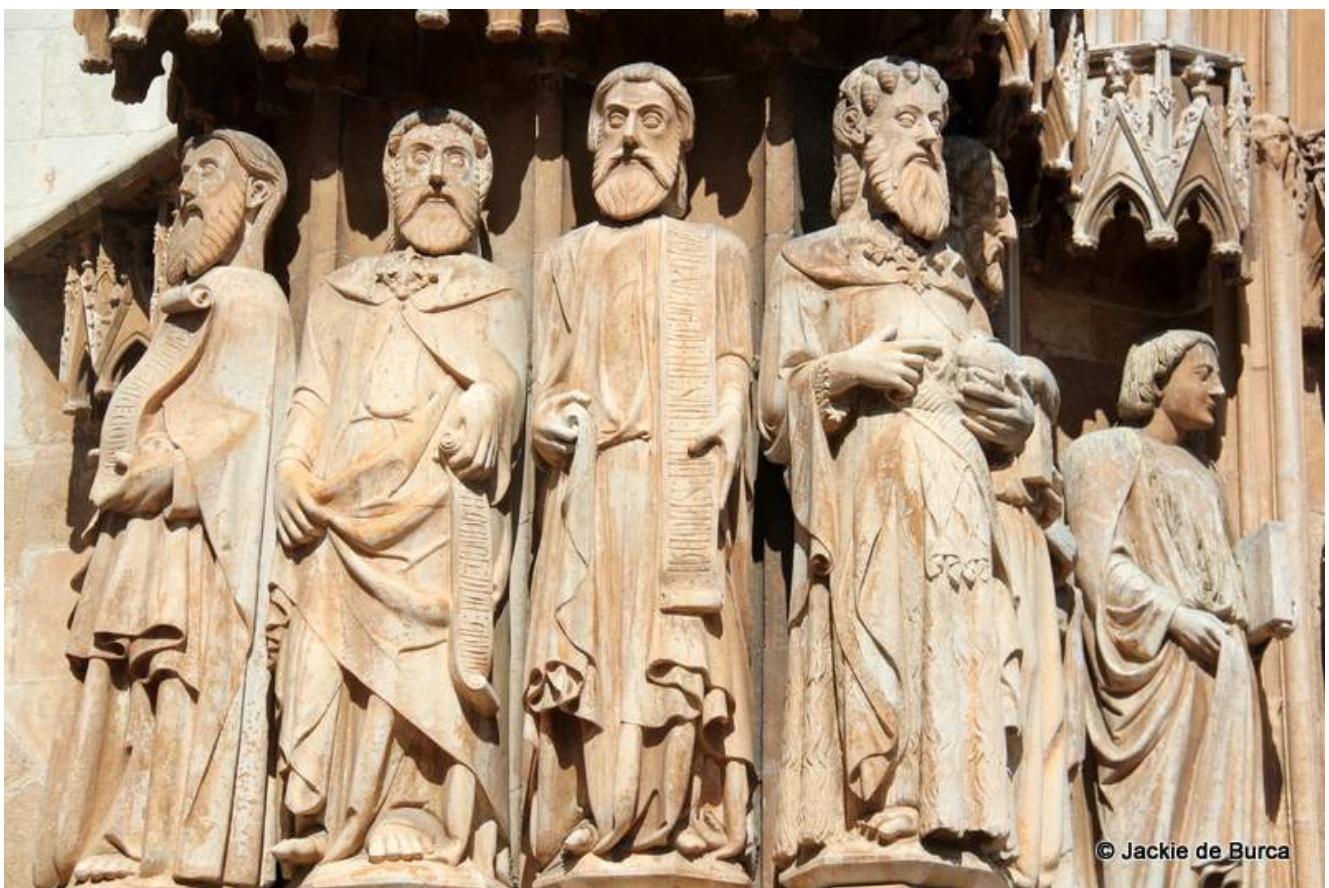


Cathedral © Manel Antolí (RV Edipress)

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Although its architecture began in the Romanesque genre, later elements were created in the Gothic style, as construction carried on over a few centuries. In 1331, the Cathedral was consecrated but building work ceased from 1348 because of the horrific impact of the [Black Death](#).

Even though construction work started later again and continued for a number of centuries, the Cathedral's main façade, which features three beautiful portals, remains unfinished. However the intricate, amazing stone sculptures of the apostles have a suitably breathtaking impact to distract the visitor for a while.



The Cathedral just keeps on giving with its ever so impressive tower, spectacular altarpiece and numerous chapels.

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2. TARRAGONA ROMAN ROUTE

Tarragona, formerly called Táraco in Roman times, was a Roman capital of great importance. Archaeological excavations have revealed a collection of Roman ruins which present an impressive picture of how life was during that era. In fact this ensemble of exceptional importance was declared to be a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) in 2000.



Amphitheatre © Manel Antolí (RV Edipress)

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The amphitheatre is a marvellous sight overlooking the Mediterranean sea, with a capacity for an audience of 15,000 people. Each year in May, the festival Tàrraco Viva takes place for two weeks giving visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in Roman life reenactments and experiences. The video below by the Tourist Board of Tarragona is a taste of this, filmed in the amphitheatre.

Other highlights include the Roman circus and theatre, two integral aspects of Roman life, which the Romans considered essential for a good lifestyle. In our routes section you can find the Roman Route, but some relics are even hidden in restaurants and rock bars in Tarragona's historical centre, the Part Alta.

Discover more about the [Roman Route](#)

3. TARRAGONA MEDIEVAL ROUTE

The Cathedral is part of Tarragona's Medieval Route, which includes other highlights such as the King's Castle, the Jewish Quarter, the Church of St. Lawrence and the city's walls, which were originally Roman.

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Mercat Central (Central market) © Manel Antolí (RV Edipress)

Learn more about [Tarragona's Medieval Route](#)

4. TARRAGONA MODERNIST ROUTE

Throughout Catalonia there are numerous marvellous examples of Modernist Architecture and Tarragona is no exception. The Tarragona Modernist Route takes you to twenty three examples of this genre dotted around the city, including the city's slaughterhouse, the wonderful Ximeni's house, the Central Market and the fascinating boat-type architecture of the Metropol Theatre.

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Discover more about [Tarragona's Modernist Route](#)

While parts of all of these routes will take you into the old quarter, it is so full of character and beauty that it is worth spending some time just wandering aimlessly around it. Rather than having a specific route or agenda, why not appreciate its contrasts, streets, architecture, shops, bars and restaurants by discovering it at your own pace.

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Merceria Street Arches

One of my favourite streets is Carrer Merceria (Merceria Street), which takes you from the steps of the Cathedral to the Baixada del Patriarca, with its wonderful Gothic 14th century arches. This was the location of the farmers' market in the Middle Ages. These days you'll find a Sunday morning antique market there.

5. HUMAN CASTLES

While the tourist authority of the city has adopted the theme of Living History, which is certainly true, Castellers are an absolutely essential aspect of the identity and culture of Tarragona. Castellers, which translates into human towers, is a tradition that can be traced back to 1712, in the town of Valls in the province of Tarragona. The practice didn't take long to spread to other places in Catalonia.

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Incredibly impressive and of huge social importance nowadays in the [Catalan culture](#), these human towers can go up to ten tiers. Today across Catalonia there are more than 15,000 people in over 100 groups passionately practising this amazing tradition.



Human castles © Manel R. Granell

As [Tarragona](#) was one of the earliest adopters of human towers, the city is immensely proud of this tradition and visitors can marvel at this spectacle from late June until late October.

Website: <https://www.mnat.cat/en/>

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6. NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Originally a provincial museum in the middle of the 19th century, Tarragona's National Museum of Archaeology is home to a very important collection of artifacts from the Roman era, including pottery and sculpture.

A beautiful balcony overlooking the Mediterranean, when you visit you need to "tocar ferro" which means to touch iron, on this special railing to bring you luck. Apart from the luck it is rumoured to bring you, the views are spectacular.



Balcó del Mediterrani (Mediterranean "balcony") © Manel Antolí (RV Edipress)

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7. EL SERRALLO

El Serrallo is the fishermen's district of Tarragona. It is living history of the city's fishing tradition, which has been written about as far back as the 13th century.

Saunter around the labyrinth of cobbled streets with its characterful, colourful narrow buildings. Once rather rundown, the Serrallo district is a vibrant place to sample some delicious seafood while absorbing Tarragona's strong link to the sea.



El Serrallo © Manel Antolí (RV Edipress)

Located in El Serrallo is a great fish market and a large fishing fleet. The only downside is trying to decide which restaurant to choose, from the numerous ones on offer.

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8. TAMARIT CASTLE

Located 10 km on the road to Altafulla, on the N-340 at KM 1171, is the gorgeous Tamarit Castle which stands majestically overlooking the Mediterranean sea. It can be traced back to the 11th century and combines both defensive and residential elements. Today it is a wedding and events venue.



The whole walled village and the castle combines Gothic Romanesque and Renaissance architecture. In fact its church is one of the purest, earliest examples of the Romanesque genre within the entire municipality of Tarragona.

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9. THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

The aqueduct called Les Ferreres is one of the landmarks of Tarragona, and is known locally as the Devil's Bridge. It gets this name from an interesting legend, more about that in a moment. As well as the impressive aqueduct, there is an eco-historic park there. It's a lovely spot to explore the local nature and maybe bring your parents for a picnic. The first Saturday of each month is a big family day out there traditionally, with parents and children getting together to enjoy the privileged environment and famous monument.



Les Ferreres Aqueduct Tarragona © Manel R. Granell

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According to the legend, there was an elderly couple who needed to cross the old wooden bridge, that used to be in the same location, to go to market each day. The couple had a donkey to help them carry their goods to the market. One night there had been a very dramatic storm, so when the couple reached the old wooden bridge the next day, it had been destroyed. The man felt useless, knowing that he was no longer young and strong enough to build a new bridge.

The couple were in shock and feeling really worried about their situation, when a mysterious stranger appeared, as if out of nowhere. He asked them about their troubles, so they explained what had happened. The stranger said he would build a new bridge for them. The couple asked what he wanted in exchange for the new bridge. He replied that he would want the soul of the first creature to cross the new bridge. After some time, they agreed, as they had no other solution. Of course they already knew that if the man could build a bridge for them like this, he had to be the devil himself.

The next morning they walked to the place of the old wooden bridge, and there was a fine impressive new bridge there. The stranger had carried out his part of the bargain, now it was their turn. The woman used the rod to get their donkey moving and the three started walking over the new bridge. The donkey was the first one to cross. The devil was very angry, but there was nothing he could do, except take the soul of the poor creature.

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Les Ferreres Aqueduct / Pont del Diable Bridge (Devil's Bridge) © Manel Antolí (RV Edipress)

If you (or your child) would like to read a happier version of this story, head over to:

[Daniel the donkey and the devil's deal](#)