

In seven years of international gay holidaying, if ever there was a destination that escaped me, it was Sitges. Located less than 30 minutes away by train from Barcelona and about the same distance from the airport, it's easily this writer's favourite of the four gay European summer breaks. Combining the boutique and chic beauty of Mykonos town with the cruisey club life of Gran Canaria with the cosmopolitan blend of Dolce & Gabbana vests via D Squared tank tops as seen in Ibiza Town.

So, with a last minute flight booking via Sensations we were off for a spontaneous trip to Spain's Brighton. The obvious place to stay in Sitges is Hotel Romantic which is every bit as charismatic as the name suggests and the first choice of most gay travellers. Of course, there are many other hotels available, and the vast majority are extremely gay friendly. However, if you don't particularly like the idea of hotel living, Sitges is amazing for finding yourself your own apartment to rent. Outlet, the established gay letting agency from the UK, now operate in Spain and specialise in Barcelona and Sitges. They found us a stunning two bedroom apartment complete with huge terrace and barbecue area just minutes from the centre of town where we spent three days entertaining new friends.

For the remainder of the week, Brad & Michael, the two Aussie owners of the Beach House restaurant, rented us an apartment - worth checking out if you fancy staying somewhere gay owned and run - not to mention decorated accordingly, all very Elton John style (in the best possible taste). When you settled in your home from home, do yourself a favour and make sure you eat at least once at the Beach House restaurant. Brad & Michael have the most unassuming restaurant in town. What looks like a standard bar from outside actually features the friendliest staff, finest food and best atmosphere's in town. Michael cooks all the meals, and options vary from Thai inspired fish cakes to BBQ steaks via curries and spag bog. An eclectic menu for sure, but the quality of food rivals many London restaurants... a visit to Sitges is simply redundant if you miss this gem. Did I mention the staff are all gorgeous? And gay (or straight and open to suggestion...). In the daytime and afternoon, breakfast bitch Paul serves up the eggs (fried, scrambled or unfertilised), while during the evening, once a week, you'll find another side to Paul entertaining the guests at dinner.



So that's food and shelter done... now what about sex and socialising? The nudist beach in Sitges is where the more extrovert queens flock to and is located just five minutes to the left of the Parish Church of Sant Bartomeu and Santa Tecla, known locally as 'La Punta'. (You can't miss La Punta - it's the stunning church that juts out to sea on the hilltop.) The beach is divided in two; the easiest accessible section is mostly straight, while most gay boys wade quite campily through the water to the right and into the small and often crowded cove. It's cruise city from there on. We found ourselves a lovely little Italian go-go dancer by the name of Gorgio to take home at the end of a long hard day of sun bathing.

Those who shun gay nudity for gay posturing should head to Platja De La Bassa Rodona, located a short mince to the right of La Punta. Walk along the promenade and you know you've arrived when you get distracted by the crotch count and the occasional serious faux pas in swim wear choice. Further down you'll find Playa el Espigón (Espigón Beach), which is a popular cruise ground at around 3am. Be aware of pick-pockets as it's a very dark and secluded area. Fortunately, the only incident we can report was a 'cutie from Amsterdam we'll refer to here as 'buckie arse'.

Clubs and bars in Sitges, as with all countries on the Mediterranean get busy very late. Bars don't get going till at least midnight with people moving onto to clubs at around 3am. There are endless flyer boys with free or discount passes to the town's main two gay clubs Organic (Bonaire 15) and Trailer (Angel Vidal 36). Trailer is the more cruisey of the two with weekly foam and cruise nights and a vast dark room. Music is hit and miss; we heard some great house tunes out there but a fair

share of commercial Euro-garbage too. Bar wise we recommend Prinz (Nou 4), XXL (not a bear club, but more cruisey on Joan Tarrida 7) and Mediterraneo (Sant Bonaventura 6). The street for catwalk queens is Marques de Montroig - pouting seems to be de rigueur here.

Sitges has so much going for it. You can party all night in Barcelona then get the train back in the morning and hit the beach. You can equally stay in town as the variety of bars, clubs and boys is more than enough to please and the day-time eye candy is divine as you don't get the scrappy hetero-Tenerife types here. What's more you can do the entire thing as a weekend break as Barcelona's just a few short hours from London. Go, now, catch the end of summer or keep it in mind for next year, but do visit.

**Sensations (tel: 020 8902 7177)
Outlet Spain (Galleries via Sitges, speak to the lovely Emma or Sarah on +34 93 810 2711 or email them at holidays@outlet4spain.com)
Beach House (Sant Pau, tel: + 93 894 90 29, www.beachhousesitges.com)**



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