

Maribel's Guide to Barcelona © -Updates

Inauguration of the new high speed AVE train, Barcelona to Madrid

After years of frustrating delays, the Spanish National Railways, RENFE, has announced that long anticipated high speed AVE will be officially inaugurated on February 20 with service open to the general public on inauguration day. There will be both daily non-stop trains and trains with intermediary stops. Most of the 7 daily non-stop trips from Barcelona will take 2 hr 38 min. The ride with 3 intermediary stops at Tarragona-Lleida-Zaragoza will take 2 hr 50 min. The train will travel at a maximum speed of 300 kilometers per hour, with the average speed of between 230-240 km. per hour.

Tickets can be purchased on line at www.renfe.es beginning February 14.

Standard one-way fare will be €102 (with stops) and €120 (non stop). The round trip fare will cost €163.20 and €192, constituting a savings of 20%.

There will also be a limited number of web-only, deeply discounted fares (60% off), which must be purchased online a minimum of 15 days in advance. They will cost €40,8 (with stops) and €48 (non stop). These fares may only be purchased one way.

Another discounted (40% off) option will be the “Estrella” fares, which must be purchased no later than 7 days in advance, with prices of €61 (with stops) and €72 (non stop).

The aforementioned fares are in **tourist class**.

Renfe will also offer an open ticket, “Puente AVE”, for €168,50, to be used any time within a year of purchase (similar to Iberia's walk up Puente Aéreo fares). This ticket can be validated in any of the auto-check in machines at the Renfe stations.

The initial 34 daily trains, 17 in each direction, will have a seating capacity of 13,498.

Renfe guarantees that if your AVE train arrives between 15-30 minutes, late, you will be refunded half the ticket price. If your train arrives more than a half hour late, you will receive a full refund.

Late night dining after a concert at Teatre Liceu or Palau de la Música

I often receive inquiries as to where to dine prior to or after a concert at both of these beautiful performing arts theaters.

When attending a concert at the Palau, one can have light fare at the café in the foyer, open from 10am-midnight. Or for a more formal lunch or dinner, the Palau offers the new Catalán-French brasserie, the **Mirador**, whose menu is supervised by star chef Jean

Luc Figueres. The Mirador is open for lunch from 1:00 – 4:00, when a menú del día is offered for €25, and it opens for dinner from 8:30 until midnight. Count on a minimum €45 per person for dinner.

In the vicinity of the Palau, to the west of Via Laitana, on Carrer Comtal, 28, you'll find a branch of the very successful tapas bar/restaurant, **Taller de Tapas**. This attractive space makes a comfortable setting for sampling tapas the easy way-with English menu and table seating. Each dish is freshly prepared to order, and prices are gentle.

After a performance at the Teatre Liceu on the Ramblas, a very convenient, attractive and pleasant spot to enjoy a post performance meal is at the **Restaurant Attic**, just across the street and slightly north of the Liceu (Ramblas 120), upstairs, with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the lively-at-all-hours Ramblas. Here as well you have Mediterranean fare at very affordable prices. It has become quite popular, particularly with tourists, it's recommended by the desk staffs at area hotels, so to avoid disappointment, you should reserve. Open for dinner from 7:00 pm - 12:30 am. (www.attic.angrup.com/english/index.htm)