



# DALI'S SPAIN

Explore the extraordinary world of the master surrealist

Salvador Dalí on the set  
of the film 'Spellbound'  
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Fundación Gala-Salvador  
Dalí, Figueres, 2007



## Get inspired by a trip to the magical and magnificent Spain of Salvador Dalí

The first things you notice are the huge, cream-coloured eggs, balanced on the parapet of the roof as if they're awaiting a giants' breakfast. Interspaced, on raised plinths, is a crown of golden mannequins, Art-Deco figurines that strike classical and balletic poses. The façade of the building is studded with triangular plasterworks resembling doughy loaves of bread; beyond, you can make out the transparent cupola, a perfect scientific orb that sits atop the structure like a vast bubble.

Welcome to "the largest surrealist object in the world" and "a building that is a work of art in itself" – the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres on the Costa Brava in northeastern Spain. Conceived and created by Salvador Dalí over a 13-year period and opened in 1974, the museum not only houses the world's finest collection of works by the great Spanish artist, but it is also a unique testament to his extravagant originality and eccentric imagination. Dalí designed and directed the entire look of the space, from the smallest detail to the grandest gesture.

Consisting of a converted 19th-century former city theatre, burned down at the end of the Spanish Civil War, and a modern extension, the Theatre-Museum boasts more than 4,000 of Dalí's works, around 1,500 of which are on display at any time. All periods of his prodigious creative output, from the 1920s to the 1980s, are represented, as is the multiplicity of his protean and playful talent, from painting to sculpture, drawing, engraving, installation, jewellery, photography, lithographs, tapestries and holograms.

As well as showing celebrated paintings such as *The Spectre of Sex Appeal* and *Soft Self-Portrait With Grilled Bacon*, the museum displays, at the back of the original stage, a massive surrealist backdrop Dalí produced for New York's Metropolitan Opera House. Elsewhere is the renowned statue *Venus de Milo With Drawers*; look up to the ceilings and you'll spy a bath, a lamp in the form of hydrogen atoms, and a fantastical painting that provides the illusion of ascending towards the heavens.

In the soaring central courtyard is the installation *Rainy Taxi*, featuring a beautiful black 1930s' Cadillac; when a coin is placed in a nearby slot, "rainwater" falls inside the car and on to its occupants – models of a driver and two passengers, and a collection of Burgundy snails. Up on the first floor is a recreation of Dalí's famous three-dimensional work *Face of Mae West Which May Be Used As An Apartment*. Climbing a short flight of stairs takes you to a viewing platform from where you view the installation through a reducing lens that hangs from the underside of a camel. Magically, the apartment's sofa is transformed into the actress' lips, the chimney her nose, the paintings her eyes.

While the Dalí Theatre-Museum is one of the most popular museums in Spain, attracting more than one million visitors a year, it is far from being a traditional, chronological or explicatory gallery. The museum is more a series of spaces replete with ideas, suggestions, provocations and double meanings. It's like entering the labyrinth of the artist's mind, his inner world.

"I think people are attracted to Dalí's museum not only because he created some of the best-known and most iconic images of the 20th century, but also because of its sense of mystery and imagination," says Montse Aguer, director of Dalinian Studies at the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation. It is this foundation that is co-producing the Dalí & Film exhibition that is being staged at Tate Modern from 1 June to 9 September.

"There is a feeling of entering a world of dreams and the unconscious, of a kind of game or play in a very special theatre," continues Aguer. "In the best possible sense, the museum is like a thematic park – it appeals equally to adults and children, and to anyone with any kind of visual interest. All his life and evolution is here."

In fact, it is impossible to separate Dalí from the museum and the city. The artist was born in Figueres, baptised in the church opposite the museum, held his first exhibition of paintings in the vestibule of the original theatre, and he died in the museum's Torre Galatea in 1989. His tomb lies in the museum's crypt.

Dalí was also very much a man and an artist of the surrounding Empordà region. From 1930 to 1982, Dalí lived and worked with his Russian émigré wife Gala in a fisherman's house in the tiny hamlet of Port Lligat on the northern coast of Costa Brava, around 25kms from Figueres. They left the house, and the country, during the war years, yet on their return Dalí and Gala extended the house and garden into a dramatic private refuge and light-filled work studio. Since 1997, the house has been open to the public.

Like his museum in Figueres, it is an utterly inspirational place to visit. Small groups are guided around the house and garden, stopping to take in the assemblages of objects, furniture and mementoes. The home is more restrained than the museum, yet there remains a kind of mischievous excess, from the stuffed animals to the snail clock, from the Pirelli advertising boards by the swimming pool to a supine statue of found objects, titled Christ of the Rubbish, that adorns the olive garden.

Further south, 40kms from Figueres in the village of Púbol, the "Dalí Triangle" is completed by the 14th-century castle that Dalí bought, restored and designed for his wife in 1970. Plainer still than the couple's home in Port Lligat, the Gala Dalí Castle is where Gala lived until her death in 1982; Dalí was only allowed to visit her with written permission.

Also open to the public, the castle is an imposing yet welcoming building built around a deep, narrow courtyard. During his renovation of the castle, Dalí painted another celestial ceiling in the vestibule; in the romantic garden he placed sculptures of elephants with elongated legs and crows on top of their backs.

"You can't really understand Dalí and his work without visiting the places that were important to him," says Montse Aguer. "He was also an artist very in tune with the landscape of the area – you can see the wind-sculpted rocks and tall cypress trees in his paintings, as well as the influence of Mediterranean light and colour; the deep blue seas and skies."

It's easy to see why artists, writers and filmmakers such as Picasso, Federico García Lorca, Luis Buñuel, René Magritte and Marc Chagall were also attracted to the Costa Brava, and part of the joy of a visit to the Dalí Triangle is the opportunity it provides to explore the riches of the surrounding natural and cultural landscape that inspired them.

Just two kilometres from the Dalí house at Port Lligat is the charming and wonderfully secluded holiday village of Cadaqués, where Dalí's father was born and the young artist spent many summer holidays. Nearby too is the remarkable and remote Cap de Creus Nature Reserve, an atmospheric area of windswept rocks, cliffs and coves.

Along the coast from Cadaqués is the seaside town of Roses, made famous as the location of El Bulli, which was recently voted the world's best restaurant. Its innovative and experimental chef-owner Ferran Adrià has been suitably proclaimed "the Salvador Dalí of cuisine". And high up in the arid mountains that form a theatrical backdrop to Port Lligat is Sant Pere de Rodes, a 10th-century Benedictine monastery that offers unrivalled views over the entire northern coastline.

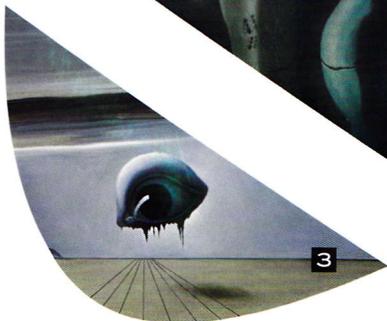
Near the Gala Castle are the magnificent and monumental Greco-Roman ruins of Empúries ([www.mac.es](http://www.mac.es)); the elegant medieval town of Peratallada, with its winding streets, castle keep and porticoed square; and the holiday resorts of Llafranc and Calella de Palafrugell, which have sandy Blue Flag beaches and bustling bars and restaurants.

The city of Girona is also well worth a stopover. The historic old town has a majestic cathedral reached by steep rococo steps, carefully restored city walls that offer views over the city, and the winding, narrow streets of one of the best preserved Jewish quarters in Europe.

It also has a fun and fascinating Cinema Museum ([www.museudelcinema.org](http://www.museudelcinema.org)), within which there are resounding echoes of Dalí's art. Dedicated to the early history of cinema, the interactive museum displays such wonders as magic lanterns, camera obscuras, optical toys and visual games. It's not hard to see why Dalí was eager to explore the new medium with such great cinematic iconoclasts as Luis Buñuel, the Marx Brothers, Walt Disney and Alfred Hitchcock.

Other areas of Spain also supply ample stimulation for the traveller in search of Dalí. Madrid was an important city to the artist; it is where he studied and first met Lorca and Buñuel. The capital's famed Reina Sofía Museum ([www.museoreinasofia.es](http://www.museoreinasofia.es)) contains around 60 of Dalí's paintings, many donated by the artist himself, including such notable works as *The Great Masturbator* and *Woman at the Window*. The nearby Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum ([www.museothyssen.org](http://www.museothyssen.org)) also includes several works by Dalí.

In Barcelona, at the National Art Museum of Catalonia ([www.mnac.es](http://www.mnac.es)), there are two well-known early Dalí portraits: one of his father; another of his father and sister. There are also Dalí paintings, including *Composition* from 1946, in the Museum of Contemporary Spanish Art in Palma de Mallorca ([www.march.es](http://www.march.es)), while the Patio Herreriano Museum in Valladolid ([www.asomateavalladolid.com](http://www.asomateavalladolid.com)) has several studies Dalí made for his work *Soft Construction With Boiled Beans* (Premonition of the Civil War).



1. **Salvador Dalí** *Un Chien Andalou* 1929. Film, running time: 16 minutes, Contemporary Films © Salvador Dalí. Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS, 2007
2. **Salvador Dalí** *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* 1937, Oil on canvas, 511 x 781 mm, Painting Tate. Purchased 1979 © Salvador Dalí. Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS, 2007
3. **Salvador Dalí** *Study for the dream sequence in 'Spellbound'* 1945, Oil on panel, Painting © Salvador Dalí. Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS, 2007
4. **Salvador Dalí** *Large Head of Greek God*, design for the Walt Disney film *Destino* 1946, Oil on masonite, 635 x 505 mm (c) Disney © Salvador Dalí. Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS, 2007
5. **Salvador Dalí** *Inaugural Goose Flesh* (Surrealist Composition) 1928, Oil on canvas, 755 x 625 mm Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres © Salvador Dalí. Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS, 2007

On the Costa del Sol, a collection of sculptures, derived from smaller figures made by Dalí, line the seafront in Marbella, and on the approach to nearby Puerto Banús, there is a huge, three-ton statue titled *Rhinoceros Dressed In Lace*.

In a characteristic act of roguish bravado, Dalí once proclaimed: "I'm going to live forever – geniuses don't die." On the beautiful Costa Brava, and throughout his beloved Spain, that ambition is more alive than ever.

For further information go to [www.spain.info/uk](http://www.spain.info/uk), [www.catalunyatourisme.com](http://www.catalunyatourisme.com), [www.costabrava.org](http://www.costabrava.org), [www.salvador-Dali.org](http://www.salvador-Dali.org) and [www.Dali-estate.org](http://www.Dali-estate.org). Visits to the Dalí house in Port Lligat must be booked in advance; email [pilgrups@Dali-estate.org](mailto:pilgrups@Dali-estate.org) or phone 00 34 972 251 015.

