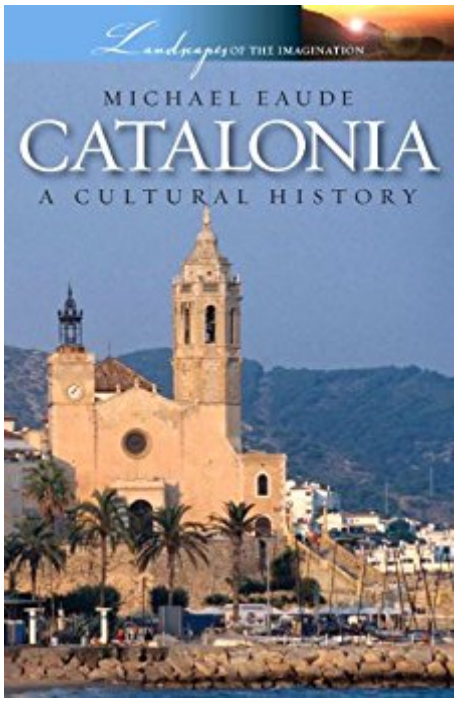
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Catalonia - A Cultural History



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Synopsis

Squeezed between more powerful France and Spain, Catalonia has endured a violent history. Its medieval empire that conquered Naples, Sicily and Athens was crushed by Spain. Its geography, with the Pyrenees falling sharply to the rugged Costa Brava, is tormented, too.Michael Eaude traces this history and its monuments: Roman Tarragona, celebrated by the poet Martial; Greek Empuries, lost for centuries beneath the sands; medieval Romanesque architecture in the Vall de Boi churches (a World Heritage Site) and Poblet and Santes Creus monasteries. He tells the stories of several of CataloniaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great figures: Abbot Oliva, who brought Moorish learning to Europe, the ruthless mercenary, Roger de Flor, and Verdaguer, handsome poet-priest.Catalonia is famous today for its twentieth-century art. This book focuses on the revolutionary Art Nouveau buildings (including the Sagrada Familia) of Antoni Gaudi. It also explores the regionÃ¢â ¬â„¢s artistic legacy: the young Picasso painting BarcelonaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s vibrant slums; Salvador Dali, inspired by the twisted rocks of Cap de Creus to paint his landscapes of the human mind; and Joan Miro, discovering the colours of the red earth at Montroig.

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Customer Reviews

If your plan is to go to the Costa Brava and spend all your time at the beach, this book is not for you. However, if you are interested in the history of Catalonia and all the things that go into forming the Catalan's heritage, this is an excellent book for obtaining the background knowledge necessary to be a more cultured traveler. This overview of all things catalan was quite helpful to me in preparing for an upcoming trip. I feel like I know a little about the land, people and culture of this interesting portion of Spain (or future country).Well worth the read for those who seek a little deeper knowledge without being a textbook.

Eaude explores Catalonia, the other great unSpanish region of Spain along with the Basque country, in this cultural history. He looks not just at traditional art and architecture but also food, music, and sport. He also ventures far afield from CataloniaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s great metropolis, Barcelona, to the hamlets of the coast and mountains and everything in between. Eaude keeps the focus on CataloniaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s cultural history, but quite a bit of other history seeps in, especially of the Franco dictatorship.

I bought this book looking for historical information about Catalonia so I would understand more about the area I was vacationing in. It was more in depth than I anticipated but contained the facts to expalin the historical context of the culture I tried to dip into to.

Interesting history of Barcelona and the Catalan area of Spain which focuses on the artists and architects, musicians and politicians that have made this unique area.

An incredibly vivid and accurate writing of the history and culture of Catalonia. I must read for anyone traveling to the country!

This book is not a typical historical narrative that starts in the distant past and goes up to the present. Instead, it presents a series of connected essays on Catalonia. The first part, which I enjoyed the most, deals with the various towns and regions of Catalonia. The author does really convey a sense of place, and it worked both as historical and travel writing.The second section, on artists, I found a bit harder to get through, particularly for the earlier, less-known (to me at least) artists. There weren't many illustrations, which made it a bit hard to visualize. The sections on Gaudi, Picasso, Dali and Miro were more interesting because I had more background knowledge, I

think.The last section deals with the key role Catalonia played in the Spanish Civil War and the way that Franco punished it afterward, not allowing for the expression of Catalan identity. Then the author turns to everyday spaces of Catalan identity today, such as food, landscape and FC Barcelona.As someone interested in Russian regional identity, I found this book very interesting. The sense of independent identity is quite strong. It would be very illuminating for someone to compare Catalonia and Siberia, for example, as both are examples of what John Robertson, in his _The Case for the Enlightenment_, calls "a kingdom governed as a province."After reading this book, I came away feeling that I'd been on a journey through Catalan places and times.

This is a solid, compact overview of Catalonia, its history, literature, architecture, art, music and cuisine. At times it reads like a textbook; however, it is never dry. In some places, e.g., its sections on Barcelona, it could serve as a guidebook. The book is a good one for structuring and organizing what you may already know about this section of Spain, It also introduces you to many other writers and books on the subject. For this reason, it is a resource that I will dip into repeatedly.

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