



Catalonia, a host region

Catalonia is a nation situated in the northeast of Spain. It borders the Mediterranean Sea to the east, France and Andorra to the north, Aragon to the west and Valencia to the south. Historically, this land has always received people coming from other cultures that have contributed to building its identity. This is why those who choose this land to live in are very welcome and encouraged to learn and share our customs and our language, Catalan.

Catalonia has more than seven and a half million inhabitants distributed among 947 municipalities. It has two administrative forms of territorial division: Catalan administrative division, with 41 counties (“comarques”), and the Spanish state administrative division, with 4 provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona. The city of Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia and the second biggest city in Spain, both in extension and in the number of inhabitants.

Catalan society and culture have developed on the basis of exchanges of ideas, customs and people, due to a long history of migrations and trade with other cultures and nations, a consequence of its location in the Mediterranean. Catalan society enjoys recognized prestige because of its institutions, its culture, its own language (Catalan) and its traditions.

History, culture and a thousand-year history¹

Catalan culture is the main symbol of Catalan identity. It is in permanent evolution and it is being enriched with its habits and traditions of those who have chosen Catalonia as their place of residence.

Catalonia has a historic and artistic legacy, which comprises the Iberian, Greek and Roman past and achieves its maximum splendour with the Romanesque art and with Modernism, whose most important exponent is Antoni Gaudí.

Popular festivals or traditions, such as *Patum de Berga* or human towers, *castellers* (both have been declared UNESCO Human Heritage) reaffirm the cultural identity of Catalonia. Other celebrations, such as *Onze de Setembre*, the 11th of September, Catalonia's national day, or *Sant Jordi*, consolidate a long tradition of public celebrations.

Catalan was born as a Romance language between the VIII and the X centuries. The first written texts date back from the end of the XI century and in the XIII century, with Ramon Llull, Catalan achieves the status of a literary language.

The language enjoyed its time of splendour during the Medieval times. Later the pre-eminence of Castilian as a language of culture provoked its literary decadence. Under the dominance of the Bourbon dynasty (1712), and as consequence of the defeat of the Catalan people in the War of Succession, the situation became rather dramatic, Catalan being banned and excluded from teaching and public domain.

In the XIX century begins the period known as *Renaixença*, and then Catalan is claimed as a prestigious language. This recovery had its peak with Pompeu Fabra, who compiled the official grammar in the year 1916 and the General Dictionary of the Catalan Language in 1932.

1. Additional information: <http://web.genocat.cat/ca/temes/catalunya>

All the information contained in this book can be found on the website of the Directorate General for Language Policy: <http://www.genocat.cat/llengua/viure/angles>

With the return of the democracy in 1977, the claim of use and respect towards the Catalan language has become a leitmotiv in the citizens' movements in Catalonia.

Catalan is the fundamental feature of the Catalan identity and key to social cohesion. Therefore its learning and command is of utter importance for newcomers in Catalonia, so they can communicate in the language specific to the host country. Furthermore, it encourages the familiarization with a new environment and allows the autonomy in different areas, such as work environment, personal relationship and citizen participation.

The Catalan language

Catalan is a Romance language, as are Spanish, French, Italian, Romanian and Portuguese, among others. It was developed between the VII and IX centuries. Currently it is spoken in Catalonia, in the Balearic Islands, in the eastern strip of Aragon and in the Valencian Community, where it receives the denomination of "Valencian". It is the only official language in Andorra, and it is also spoken in part of the south of France and in the town of Alghero (L'Alguer), on the Italian island of Sardinia. Currently the number of Catalan speakers is approximately 10 million.

Catalan is the language originally spoken in Catalonia and is now official, together with Spanish and Occitan.

There are around 6000 spoken languages in the world. Catalan is among the first 100 languages in terms of the number of speakers. Compared to the 24 official languages of the European Union, Catalan is the ninth language in terms of speakers. Nowadays about 162 universities and other educational centres around the world offer Catalan lessons.

In recent years, due to the arrival of people from other countries, a significant number of different languages can be heard on the streets of Catalonia. Currently there are over 180 nationalities in Catalonia, and more than 270 languages are spoken.

Why is it important to learn Catalan?

Command of Catalan language allows newcomers to step into many different environments of the everyday life.

Speaking Catalan is valued very positively and can contribute to professional promotion. In some companies speaking Catalan is a mandatory requirement and if one has their own business, knowing Catalan will allow them to offer better services to those clients who speak it.

Catalan is the vehicle language in education: it is the language of communication and learning process in all the education centres. Knowing Catalan will help our children in their learning process and taking further our education.

Speaking Catalan will facilitate us with the knowledge of the environment, understanding the host society and the way different services work. It will also allow to expand the network of friends and social acquaintances.

Catalan people value very positively that newcomers make an effort in understanding Catalan and are happy to see them as new citizens of Catalonia, learning the language of the host country.

Materials for language reception

The materials for language reception presented here allow newcomers to understand and practice everyday sentences. We invite you to use the Catalan language and we show you a set of phrases that will help you in this learning process.

If you have not understood something you have been told, you can say:

M'ho pot repetir, si us plau?
Can you repeat it, please?

To ask someone to speak a little bit slower, you can say:

M'ho pot dir més a poc a poc, si us plau?
Can you say it slower, please?

To say that you have not been here for not very long, you can say:

Fa poc temps que he arribat, pot parlar més a poc a poc?

I have not been here for a very long time, can you speak more slowly?

Like the English language, Catalan also has certain dialects and a standard version. In this guide we will be using the standard variant of Catalan and the standard version of English, taking into account the oral register of native speakers.