



A Literary Map of Barcelona

Map 10

Area 6: Don Quixote in Barcelona

BARCELONA CULTURA Ajuntament de Barcelona

Area 6: Don Quixote in Barcelona

Literary Tour

Tour duration: 1h
 How to get there: Liceu L3, Bus 14, 59, 91, 120.

- 1 **Biblioteca de Catalunya**
- 2 **Carrer de Perot lo Lladre**
- 3 **Barcelona Cathedral**
- 4 **The printers**
- 5 **Quixote at Barcelona City Council**
- 6 **Carrer de Cervantes**
- 7 **The House of Cervantes**
- 8 **The saddest chapter of Quixote**

Introduction

Miguel de Cervantes (Alcalá de Henares, 1547–Madrid, 1616) is one of the world’s most renowned novelists. After having published a few theatre plays and *La Galatea*, he became enormously successful with the publication of *The Ingenious Nobleman Sir Quixote of La Mancha*, also known as just **Don Quixote**. Considered the first modern novel in history, the book is a classic of world literature.

1. Biblioteca de Catalunya

Carrer del Hospital, 56 [Restricted access]

The Biblioteca de Catalunya is located at the old Hospital de la Santa Creu. Once a nurses’ quarters, the Sala Cervantina houses a collection of incalculable value dedicated to the work of Cervantes. In the early twentieth century, the librarian Isidre Bonsoms Sicart donated his collection to the library. Initially comprising some 3,400 volumes, it is one of the world’s finest collections of Cervantes, and contains all of the first editions of his work, except *La Galatea*, as well as translations, adaptations, biographical works and critiques, and different manuscripts and other material related to the author from La Mancha. The collection is not only kept in pristine condition, but some of the copies also feature wonderful artistic bookbinding. Over the years, the collection has tripled in volume thanks to the writer’s purchasing ability and to new donations. There is restricted access, but the room can be viewed through programmed guided tours, and is opened on certain special occasions.

Leave the library on Carrer del Carme and head towards La Rambla. Cross the Rambla and follow Carrer de la Portaferrissa, until you reach Carrer de Perot lo Lladre on the right hand side.

2. Carrer de Perot lo Lladre

Although Cervantes always changes the names of real people in his books to avoid them being easily recognizable, in *Quixote* there are two exceptions. The first of these is Gerónimo de Passamonte, one of the writer’s old military friends who is given the name Ginés de Passamonte in the novel, and who some scholars consider the possible author of *Quixote apocryphal*. The second is the famous bandit Perot Rocaguinarda (1582–1635), who in the novel becomes Roque Guinart, and this Barcelona street was named after him.

Nearing Barcelona, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza come across a gang of bandits led by Guinart:

[...] “who was about thirty-four years of age apparently, strongly built, above the middle height, of stern aspect and swarthy complexion. He was mounted upon a powerful horse, and had on a coat of mail, with four of the pistols they call petronils in that country at his waist. He saw that his squires (for so they call those who follow that trade) were about to rifle Sancho Panza, but he ordered them to desist and was at once obeyed [...]. He wondered to see the lance leaning against the tree, the shield on the ground, and Don Quixote in armour and dejected, with the saddest and most melancholy face that sadness itself could produce; and going up to him he said, ‘Be not so cast down, good man, for you have not fallen into the hands of any inhuman Busiris, but into Roque Guinart’s, which are more merciful than cruel.’”

From Portaferrissa, continue straight until Carrer dels Boters, which leads onto Avinguda de la Catedral.

3. Barcelona Cathedral

Pla de la Seu, s/n

Although there is no documentary evidence backing the fact that Cervantes lived in Barcelona, there are several hypotheses regarding this. Philologist **Martí de Riquer**, a great scholar of the work of Cervantes, estimated that the author lived in the city at some point after May 1609 but before October 1611. It is very probable that at some point during his stay, Cervantes visited the Barcelona Cathedral. It is also more than likely that he surely would have noticed the chapel dedicated to the Holy Christ of Lepanto. The crucifix, which travelled to the Gulf of Greece during the battle in which Cervantes lost mobility in his left hand, has no known author and was donated by John of Austria in person to the cathedral in 1571, year of the battle.

In the final pages of the first part of *Don Quixote*, the writer explains the following:

[...] “the author of this history, though he has devoted research and industry to the discovery of the deeds achieved by Don Quixote in his third sally, has been unable to obtain any information respecting them, at any rate derived from authentic documents; tradition has merely preserved in the memory of La Mancha the fact that Don Quixote, the third time he sallied forth from his home, betook himself to Saragossa, where he was present at some famous jousts which came off in that city, and that he had adventures there worthy of his valour and high intelligence.”

Although Cervantes wrote that Don Quixote would spend the third of his adventures in Saragossa, he ended up taking him to Barcelona. He did so to demonstrate that the *Second Volume of the Ingenious Nobleman Sir Quixote of La Mancha*, that had appeared in Tarragona in 1614 and was “composed by the doctorate Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda”, was completely false. Written in record time, the *Second Volume of the Ingenious Nobleman Sir Quixote of La Mancha*, was published exactly a year after the appearance of *Quixote apocryphal*.

Cervantes writes a scene in which the two protagonists spend the night in a hostel on their way to Saragossa, and they find out about *Quixote apocryphal* after overhearing a conversation between a servant and his master:

“As you live, Señor Don Jeronimo, while they are bringing supper, let us read another chapter of the Second Part of ‘Don Quixote of La Mancha.’”

The instant Don Quixote heard his own name he started to his feet and listened with open ears to catch what they said about him, and heard the Don Jeronimo who had been addressed say in reply,

“Why would you have us read that absurd stuff, Don Juan, when it is impossible for anyone who has read the First Part of the history of ‘Don Quixote of La Mancha’ to take any pleasure in reading this Second Part?”

Don Quixote interrupts their conversation and, indignant, tells them that the book they are reading is false. Following the discovery, Don Quixote decides to divert to a different destination in order to debunk Avellaneda’s work.

[The guests] “asked him where he was headed on his journey. [Don Quixote] replied, to Saragossa, to take part in the harness jousts which are held in that city every year. Don Juan explained to him that the new story told of how Don Quixote, or whomever he was, had ended up participating in tilting at the rings in Saragossa, but was sorely lacking in creativity, hardly literate, poor in liversies, but rich in simplicities.

“For that very reason,” said Don Quixote, ‘I will not set foot in Saragossa; and by that means I shall expose to the world the lie of this new history I am not the Don Quixote he speaks of.’

“You will do quite right,” said Don Jeronimo; ‘and there are other jousts in Barcelona in which Señor Don Quixote may display his prowess.’

“That is what I mean to do,” said Don Quixote [...].”

Check the Cathedral website for visiting times. From in front of the cathedral, head towards and go down Carrer del Bisbe on the right until you reach Plaça de Sant Jaume. Cross the square and go down the Carrer del Call, which runs parallel to Carrer de Ferran.

4. The printers

Carrer del Call, 14-16

This is where the old printing shop belonging to Sebastià Cormellas used to be. In fact, it is still possible to see inscriptions on the façade from the eighteenth century that refer to the book trade. One of them for example, shows a crowned bust referring to Ovidi, who completed the *Metamorphoses* in the year 7 AC and whose work the printer commemorated with a new edition in 1607, seventeen centuries after its appearance. More than one expert has coincided in indicating that this shop was visited by Quixote in one of his tours around Barcelona:

“Thus it came to pass that going along one of the streets Don Quixote lifted up his eyes and saw written in very large letters over a door, ‘Books printed here,’ at which he was vastly pleased, for until then he had never seen a printing office, and he was curious to know what it was like. He entered with all his following, and saw them drawing sheets in one place, correcting in another, setting up type here, revising there; in short all the work that is to be seen in great printing offices.”

After a few questions and comments on the translation from Italian to Spanish of a book they were working on at the time, Don Quixote noticed that they were also working on another book:

“He passed on, and saw they were also correcting another book, and when he asked its title they told him it was called, ‘The Second Part of the Ingenious Nobleman Sir Quixote of La Mancha,’ by one of Tordesillas.

‘I have heard of this book already,’ said Don Quixote, ‘and verily and on my conscience I thought it had been by this time burned to ashes as a meddlesome intruder; but its Martinmas will come to it as it does to every pig; for fictions have the more merit and charm about them the more nearly they approach the truth or what looks like it; and true stories, the truer they are the better they are;’ and after saying this, he walked out of the printing office with a certain amount of displeasure in his looks.”

From Carrer del Call head to Plaça de Sant Jaume.

5. Quixote at Barcelona City Council

Plaça de Sant Jaume, 1 [Restricted access]

Barcelona City Council is located in this neoclassical style building featuring a façade by Josep Mas i Vila. Next to the office of the mayor, there is a room known as the Sala del Quixot. The walls were covered in large paintings by Francesc d’Assís Gali i Fabra in 1958. A Catalan painter and teacher, he was the nephew of Pompeu Fabra, who gave him the majority of his training. The vividly coloured paintings portray scenes of Quixote’s time in Barcelona, such as the battle he led by the seashore against the Knight of the White Moon. The room is a workspace and is not usually open to the public.

From in front of Barcelona City Council, turn right to take Carrer de Ferran until you reach Carrer del Pas de l’Ersenyança on the left. This street connects with Carrer dels Gegants and then you take Carrer de Cervantes, which is on the right hand side.

6. Carrer de Cervantes

From at least the second half of the nineteenth century, Barcelona dedicated this street to the figure of Cervantes. As well as being the setting for some chapters in the second part of *Don Quixote*, Barcelona has played an important role in the history of the novel for other reasons. In fact, it was here that the first complete edition of *Don Quixote* was printed in 1617.

The first complete translation into Catalan of *Don Quixote* was also printed in Barcelona in 1882 entitled *L’Ingeniós Hidalgo Don Quixot de la Mancha*. Written by *Miquel de Cervantes Saavedra* and translated into Catalan by Mr. *Eduard Tàmaro*, Bachelor of Law. As well as a lawyer, Tàmaro (1845–1889) was a historian and regularly contributed work to publications such as *La Renaixença* and *La Il·lustració Catalana*. For a time, he was president of the Catalan Association of Scientific Excursions (Associació Catalanista d’Excursions Científiques), which was also based on the same Cervantes street.

Continue down Carrer de Cervantes until you reach carrer d’Avinó, which you should take to the end until it joins Simó Oller, which you should also take all the way to the end, to meet up with Passeig de Colom. Take this street towards the left until you reach building number 2 after some 160 metres.

7. The House of Cervantes

Passeig de Colom, 2

The building occupying number 2 on Passeig de Colom is indicated by popular tradition as the place where Cervantes stayed during his visit to the city. Documentary evidence indicates that the people of Barcelona have considered it as “the House of Cervantes” for at least one and a half centuries.

Built in the middle of the sixteenth century, it has five floors, which is two floors higher than what would have been usual at the time. The reason for this may be due to the fact that the sea wall stood right in front of it, precisely the setting chosen by Cervantes for the great defeat of Don Quixote. Some say that he stayed at a hostel that was on the third floor, and some go even further to say that they can see the writer’s face in a male portrait hanging in one of the windows, but we do know for sure that it cannot be the author’s face because of the date.

Cross the Pla de Palau square and stand in front of the UPC’s Faculty of Nàutica (Barcelona School of Nautical Studies).

8. The saddest chapter of Quixote

Pla de Palau, 18

At this place, where the old wall that divided the beach from the city once stood, is where Don Quixote faces the Knight of the White Moon after he is challenged to a fight by him. If Quixote wins, it will mean that Dulcinea is the most beautiful woman in the world. However, if the Knight of the White Moon wins, Quixote promises to return home and leave his adventures for a whole year:

[...] “another blast of trumpet or other warlike instrument to give the signal to charge, both at the same instant wheeled their horses; and he of the White Moon, being the swifter, met Don Quixote after having traversed two-thirds of the course, and there encountered him with such violence that, without touching him with his lance (for he held it high, to all appearance purposely), he hurled Don Quixote and Rocinante to the earth, a perilous fall. He sprang upon him at once, and placing the lance over his visor said to him,

‘You are vanquished, sir knight, nay dead unless you admit the conditions of our defiance.’

Don Quixote, bruised and stupefied, raised his visor said in a weak feeble voice as if he were speaking out of a tomb,

‘Dulcinea del Toboso is the fairest woman in the world, and I the most unfortunate knight on earth; it is not fitting that this truth should suffer by my feebleness; drive your lance home, sir knight, and take my life, since you have taken away my honour.’

‘That will I not, in sooth,’ said he of the White Moon; ‘live the fame of the lady Dulcinea’s beauty undimmed as ever; all I require is that the great Don Quixote retire to his own home for a year, or for so long a time as shall by mere enjoyment upon him, as we agreed before engaging in this combat.’”

Don Quixote accepts to leave for a year, and the Knight of the White Moon, who is actually one of his neighbours from “that place in La Mancha” where Quixote comes from, gallops off on his horse. Now on his way home and far from Barcelona, Don Quixote remembers Barcelona:

[...] “Barcelona, the treasure-house of courtesy, haven of strangers, asylum of the poor, home of the valiant, champion of the wronged, pleasant exchange of firm friendships, and city unrivalled in site and beauty. And though the adventures that befell me there are not by any means matters of enjoyment, but rather of regret, I do not regret them, simply because I have seen it.”

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