



## Vignette II.

# The “Gràcia”

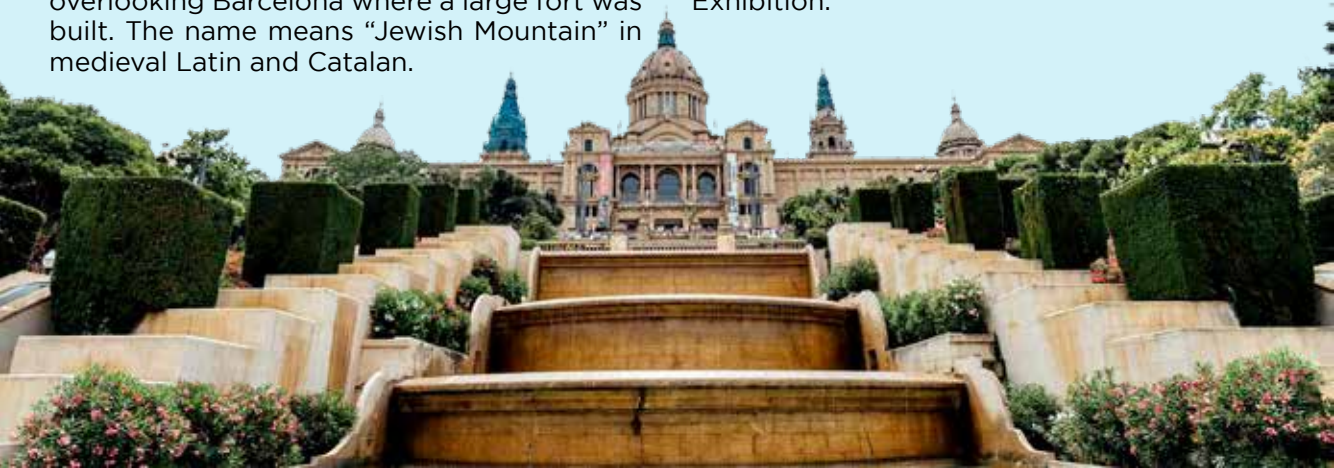


In our neighbourhood named “Gracia” (in reality the name of the metro stop) but suspect that this area is referred to as “Gracia” - there are a number of good restaurants and some very nice places to go for drinks and meet friends. One of the chaps at the reception of our hotel was very generous with his information, and helping us avoid the massive crowds that were prevalent in the downtown and central areas of Barcelona... The second night we meandered our way through a few streets, not far from our hotel, and found our way to a super bar where they also served very pleasant food. Our luck allowed us to find a high bar table in the shape of a barrel with a flat top, and with two high stools right in front of the bar (unfortunately, forgot to write down the name) which was really pleasant. Lots of people passed by and the mood was happy and carefree! As it should be on a lovely summer evening when people are socialising and enjoying their free time!

The next day we decided to avoid the large crowds and chose to go to a place overlooking Barcelona where a large fort was built. The name means “Jewish Mountain” in medieval Latin and Catalan.

According to Wikipedia, it was the birthplace of Barcelona and an important strategic location as it overlooks today's modern harbour. The castle was built in the 17th century, A Jewish cemetery is located on the hill dating back to the Middle Ages. It was also a place of imprisonment and executions, especially during the Spanish Civil War.

It took us some time to realise that we needed to take the metro to reach the cable car which would bring us to the chair lift to finally make it up the hill! We were relatively early which meant that the crowds were rather manageable. At the top we could see the castle or fort, rather massive with a large canon prominently placed over today's harbour, as assume that even in the 18th century or before that was where the harbour was located, but certainly not as large as today's modern harbour which seems to be very active. We chose not to enter the Castel Montjuic for fear of bumping into too many fellow tourists! This hill was also chosen for the 1929 International Exhibition.



On the way back down, we decided to try the place which we had spotted while going up. We feared launching ourselves into a tourist trap. It turned out to be a very good choice! We had no idea that it was a “very good restaurant”! There were some people lining up - as it had not yet opened, but soon enough we were allowed to enter and find a very nice table on their terrace with a gorgeous view over Barcelona. The menu didn't disappoint!

Barcelona is a vast city, with a variety of very interesting attractions, sites, museums, a world famous aquarium located in the harbour. In 4 -5 days you can only do so much. It was my first visit in 20 years, when tourism was on the upswing, but certainly not so massive as in the late spring of 2024! In 2004 if memory serves, after visiting Barcelona (my first trip to Catalonia and Barcelona was in 1954 or 1955! An other epoch!) I took the AVE (Spanish High Velocity: Alta Velocidad Espanola) to Sevilla which cut the trip by half or so compared to the normal train ride. Sevilla is another wonder city!

