










Barcelona Culture Pilots walk 2:

Carnival, Stilts and the Youth Centre of the Pati Llimona in the Gothic District

For many years now the Youth and Children Centre located at the Pati Llimona Civic Centre, has co-organized each February with local associations the Carnival walk in the Gothic district of Barcelona. The 'Gòtico' is a culturally diverse area, not only because it is visited by tourists from all over the world, but because of its long-standing history of immigration. The people living here today are from many cultural backgrounds, and they consolidate local traditions with personal histories in their daily life. This is often manifest in the collective celebrations, such as the Carnival walk 'Rua de Carnaval'. You can follow this walk through the narrow streets of the Gòtico any time of the year, but if you are in Barcelona for Carnival, make sure to catch it on the day of the actual celebration!

-  **Plaça Sant Miquel**
This is where all participants meet and where the 'Rua de Carnaval' starts. The youth centre at the Pati Llimona has been consolidating a group of children and youths who take part on stilts, they are called the 'Zancos' group. 'Zancos' means 'stilts' in Spanish. They learn during 6 months how to walk, dance, perform and generally move on stilts. During the run-up to the Carnival youths learn to walk on stilts, but more importantly develop new skills, such as performance, teamwork, designing masks and cloths, co-designing a long term project, and they build their self-esteem. When they meet at the Plaça Sant Miquel to start the walk, the excitement about putting all this long work on show is palpable. You can retrace their steps in half an hour, and share their experience.
-  **Carrer Gegants**
In Catalonia there is a tradition of giant figures, called 'Gegants', which are showcased at local celebrations. Each area or town has their own particular giants. These are up to three meter high figures, held together by a wooden structure, which is carried by one person hidden under the 'skirt' of the figure, during celebrations. Here at the Carrer Gegants, the 'zancos' group feel at home and much taller than before...
-  **Carrer Templaris**
The Carnival walk includes the street of the 'Templaris' named after the 'Order of the Temple', also called 'Templars'. One of the few remains of this religious order can still be found on this street, it is the 15th century 'Chapel of Palau Reial Menor'. This is a quiet street during the day, but at night becomes busy with nightlife, and it is a difficult stretch for the Carnival walk, as the streets are narrow and full with people.
-  **Carrer de la Ciutat**
From Carrer Templaris to Carrer de la Ciutat it is only a few meters, but this stretch uphill is a challenge for the 'Zancos' group, testing here their skills of walking on stilts and their stamina...
-  **Plaça Regomir and Carrer Regomir, 3**
The continuation of Carrer Ciutat is the Carrer Regomir, where we find the little alley which leads to the Pati Llimona. This 16th century building houses the Civic Centre Pati Llimona and the youth centre, both run by the local Council. It has a quiet and charming hidden away patio, and it is named after the Llimona family (and not, as many local people think, after a lemon tree)...
-  **Carrer Calella and Carrer Comtessa de Sobradriel**
After the Carrer and Plaça Regomir, the walk continues over Carrer Calella and Carrer Comtessa de Sobradriel, on to Carrer Avinyó. Look above the shop windows and cafes and bars, and you can spot the homes of the local people. Here the houses are puzzles of many centuries of building new on old, and the architectural layers mirror the cultural and historic layers so rich in this part of town.
-  **Carrer d'Avinyó**
When the Carnival walk reaches the famous Carrer Avinyó, it is crowded with people. By now many locals, as well as tourists have joined the walk along the way, and the 'Sambao' drumming youth group, who beat the rhythm and lead the walk, are cheered on and accompanied with people dancing around them.
-  **Carrer Ample**
Just as well that the next street is Carrer Ample, or 'Wide Street', and almost the end of the 'rua'.
-  **Plaça de la Mercè**
At the Plaça de la Mercè the Carnival walk ends in a loud and happy celebration. The participants dance and laugh, and the 'Zancos' group have returned to their beginnings, as it is at this square where they practice during the month before the Carnival to walk on the difficult and hard pavement. This wide and open square has enough space for them to take their first tentative steps on stilts. This same square is though transformed during the carnival, as it becomes a loud sea of singing and dance people, in front of the patron Saint 'Her Lady of the Sea'.

We hope you enjoy this walk, and that you can appreciate some of the details and charm we feel in our town, and that we have wanted to share with you.