

June 2026

Simply

SANT CUGAT



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- ✓ Valldoreix
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This month...

1. A Simple Guide to Having an Emergency
2. The Castellers of Sant Cugat
3. The New Sant Cugat Quiz Night
4. Out & About: Sant Miquel del Fai
5. Jokes, puzzles, reviews and much, much more

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**Simply SANT CUGAT®**

Eighth Edition: June 2026

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EDITORIAL

Sunshine and Fire

There is something different about this time of year in Catalonia, isn't there?

Winter here is never especially harsh, spring is beautiful, but late June feels like a turning point. The evenings are warm and long. The squares fill. Terraces overflow. Children stay out later. Somewhere in the distance, someone is already setting off fireworks.

Yes, summer has arrived.

This month's edition of Simply Sant Cugat is very much about celebrating that moment.

We explore the traditions of Sant Joan, perhaps Catalonia's loudest night. Bonfires, bangers and the strange annual urge to set old things on fire all remind us that these celebrations have roots stretching back far beyond modern festivals... back to the solstice itself and humanity's ancient relationship with light, fire and the changing seasons.

Soon after comes the Festa Major. A few days when the town goes wild: more music, more people in the streets, more traditions, more life. For newcomers, it can be surprising. For long-time residents, it feels like part celebration, part reunion.

This issue also reflects another side of summer: getting out and rediscovering where we live.

We visit Sant Miquel del Fai. We review Casa Mushiki. We discover the Castellers and the Quiz Night family who help make Sant Cugat what it is. As always, there are language corners, local stories, community notices and a few surprises.

Because that, in many ways, is what Simply Sant Cugat tries to do.

Not just report what is happening but help us be part of it.

One of the pleasures of living here is that Catalonia celebrates things publicly. Festivals are not hidden away. Traditions belong to everyone. Even if you arrived last month and

have no idea what a Tió is, you are still welcome around the bonfire.

For international residents especially, summer can be a lovely reminder of that. You do not need to understand every tradition immediately. Curiosity is enough.

So, this month, step outside.

Go to the Revetlla. Try the coca. Watch the fireworks. Visit a place you have never been. Stay in the square a little longer than usual.

And if someone hands you a sparkler or invites you to join the celebration... say yes.

Summer has begun, get out and enjoy it!

Aston & Ian




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SIMPLE GUIDES

A Simple Guide to Having an Emergency

Who to Call, How to Call, and What to Say

Not everybody is at their best in an emergency. Even people who are calm, organised and fluent in three languages can find themselves in the middle of the street, surrounded by panicking people, thinking: What was that number? What do I say? Will I get into trouble if it's not the right emergency?

So, if you find yourself involved in an emergency, don't panic! In Sant Cugat, you do not need to solve the whole problem yourself. You just need to make the right first call.

That call is **112**.

112 is the standard emergency number for all of Europe and many other countries too. It is the equivalent of 999 (UK, Ireland, Singapore, Malaysia, UAE, etc), 911 (North America, and many Latin American countries) and 000 (Australia & New Zealand). 112 is free, available 24 hours a day, and is the number to call for medical emergencies, fires, accidents, rescue, and any serious emergency that needs help right now. In practice, some countries recognise other emergency numbers. Indeed, in Spain dialling 911 gets you straight through. And you don't need to unlock your phone (or someone else's) to dial it. There's even an app for it (My112) which automatically sends your GPS location.

For international residents, there is another very important reassurance: 112 can attend calls in English, as well as Catalan, Spanish, French and German. So even if your second language has gone into seizure, you can simply start with: "English, please."

What happens when you call?

When you call 112, the operator will ask questions. This can feel frustrating if you are frightened or rapidly losing body fluids, but those questions matter. They help decide whether to send an ambulance, police, firefighters, rescue services, or more than one service at the same time.

The best thing you can do is stay as calm as you can and give short and clear answers. You do not need to tell the full story from the beginning, with



Don't panic... just call 112

background, context and precise colour references. This is not the time. Just start with the key concept, such as...

"There has been a serious car accident."

"My neighbour's house is on fire."

"There is an intruder in my house"

"I appear to have cut my arm off by mistake"

Then give the location. If you know the address, say it clearly. If you do not, describe where you are: the street, nearby shops, landmarks, park entrances, train stations, road numbers, anything useful. If you are out walking in Collserola or somewhere less obvious, remember the My112 app shares your location with emergency services. That's how dialling 112 for a break-in at your neighbour's house gets directed to the local police.

Here in Sant Cugat, there is another useful local detail. Since Jan 2025, the Policia Local de Sant Cugat has been integrated into the CAT112 emergency alert platform. That means 112 can connect incidents directly into the local emergency response system, alongside Mossos d'Esquadra, Bombers (= Fire Service, nothing to do with bombs

at all), SEM (Sistema de Emergencias Médicas) and other services.

In simple English: calling 112 is not “calling some distant office”. It is the main door into the emergency system.

What about 061?

This is where people often get confused. 061 *Salut Respon* is very useful, but it is not the same as 112.

Think of 061 as the number for health advice when the situation is worrying but not immediately life-threatening. For example, you are not sure whether you need urgent care, or you need guidance about symptoms. The 061 team can give health advice, direct you to the right centre and, if necessary, activate a doctor, ambulance or medical helicopter.

But if someone is unconscious, struggling to breathe, or badly injured, do not sit there dithering between 061 and 112. Call 112.

Nobody will be annoyed because you called it in good faith.

Finally, a few common misunderstandings

One is thinking you should call the local police directly. Sometimes that may be fine for non-urgent local matters, but in a real emergency, 112 is simpler. They coordinate the right response. If you do want to alert the police, but it is not urgent (e.g. neighbour's wild party at 2am or car has blocked your exit) then you can dial local police on 93 565 7092. For a serious crime, assault, harassment call the Mossos on 93 583 5000 or of course 112.

Another is deciding to drive someone to hospital yourself. Sometimes that is reasonable. Sometimes it is dangerous. If the person might be having a stroke, heart attack, serious allergic reaction, breathing problem or major injury, call 112 and let the professionals decide.

A third is waiting too long because you are embarrassed, unsure, or worried your language level is not good enough. Emergencies are not exams. You do not lose points for imperfect pronunciation.

The important thing is to call, explain clearly, and follow instructions.

Most of us hope we will never need 112. But knowing what to do makes a real difference. Save the number. Talk about it with your family. Teach children that 112 is for serious emergencies. And remember - in a crisis, you do not need to be heroic, bilingual and perfectly composed.

You just need to make the call.

Words We Hope You'll Never Need

English	Spanish	Catalan
Heart attack	Infarto	Infart
Stroke	Ictus	Ictus
Bleeding	Sangrando	Sangrant
Unconscious	Inconsciente	Inconscient
Broken leg	Pierna rota	Cama trencada
Burned	Quemado/a	Cremat/ada
Electrocuted	Electrocutado/a	Electrocutat/ada
Run over	Atropellado/a	Atropellat/ada
Bitten by a dog	Mordido/a por un perro	Mossegat/ada per un gos
Fell off a ladder	Se ha caído de una escalera	Ha caigut d'una escala
Trapped under a heavy object	atrapado/a bajo un objeto pesado	atrapat/ada sota un objecte pesat
Savaged by a wild pig	Atacado/a por un jabalí	Atacat/ada per un porc senglar

Essential numbers

112 - Emergency help: ambulance, fire, police, rescue, serious & immediate danger.

061 (Salut Respon) - Health advice and non-emergency medical doubts.

900 900 120 - Support for women experiencing gender violence.

116 111 - Help and protection for children and adolescents

93 583 5000 Mossos - for crime-related matters

93 565 7092 Local police - for local urban problems

April: Greek Food and Great Company



There are many glamorous moments in the life of a local magazine. There are also moments involving cardboard boxes. Fortunately, at our latest monthly meet-up, the cardboard box came with glamour and excellent Greek food.

On Wednesday 29th April, around 30 of us gathered at Dionisos Greek Restaurant, near the station, for the latest Simply Sant Cugat monthly meet-up. The idea, as always, was very simple: bring people together, say hello, launch the new edition and create a relaxed space where English-speaking residents of Sant Cugat can meet one another. And that is exactly what happened.

By 6pm, people had begun arriving - regular readers, new faces, contributors, families, pensioners, locals and internationals. And we could hear Polish, English, German, Spanish and Catalan voices, all mixing in the friendly, chatty, slightly chaotic way that tells you a meet-up is working.

Once we had what could very generously be described as a quorum, we moved to the ceremonial highlight of the evening: opening the box. Inside, fresh from the printers, was the new edition of Simply Sant Cugat. There was no ribbon-cutting, no brass band and no fireworks, but there was a definite sense of occasion - and, as always, plenty of kind comments, useful feedback and ideas for future articles.

Christos, the owner of Dionisos, gave us a warm welcome and then did something even better: he fed us. And very generously at that. Plates of Greek food appeared: dolmades, falafel, spicy sausages, hummus, pita bread and delicious sauces in quantities that went well beyond what anyone had expected. Several of us left with the happy realisation that dinner was no longer necessary. This, we feel, is one of the clearest signs of a successful community event.

Before everyone drifted back into conversations, we managed to gather for a group photo, capturing the usual mix of smiles, half-hidden faces and people wondering where exactly they were supposed to stand.

The purpose of these meet-ups is not complicated. They are open to anyone in Sant Cugat who speaks English, whether as a first language, second language, or brave work-in-progress. You do not need to know anyone. You do not need to be "networking". You can simply come along, say hello, meet a few people and feel a little more connected to the town.

That, really, is the whole point. And thanks to everyone who came. And to Dionisos for hosting us so warmly. Next month's details will be announced soon. Keep an eye on WhatsApp and on the website at www.simplysantcugat.com.

WHY DO WE DO THAT?

Sant Joan and the Mystery of the 24th June

Why we celebrate midsummer three days too late

Every year, just as summer officially arrives, Catalonia celebrates with a bang.

Today's Sant Joan is bonfires, fireworks, bangers, coca, cava, excited children and nervous dogs. But the celebration is thousands of years old, going back to pre-Christian midsummer celebrations.

But why do we celebrate it on 24th June?

The short answer is that Sant Joan sits close to the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. Long before modern calendars, people across Europe marked this turning point with fire, noise, dubious herbs, protection rituals and general midsummer mischief. The sun had reached its height - from here on, the days would slowly begin to shorten.

But there is a calendar hiccup as our celestial universe keeps its own time.

In the old Julian calendar (introduced by Julius Caesar) the solstices were traditionally associated with dates around 24/25 June and 24/25 December. That helps explain why midsummer celebrations became attached to late June, just as midwinter celebrations clustered around late December.

Then comes a bit of Roman arithmetic: the Kalends. Romans counted dates backwards from fixed points in the month. The Kalends was the first day of the month. In Roman inclusive counting, 25th December was described as "the eighth day before the Kalends of January". The matching date six months earlier, "the eighth day before the Kalends of July", was 24th June (because June has 30 days). So, the slight mismatch between 25th December and 24th June is not random. It is Roman calendar logic.

But hang on... it doesn't stop there.

The Julian calendar was good, but not perfect. It made the year slightly too long, by about eleven minutes a year. That sounds tiny, but over centuries



it added up. By the sixteenth century, the calendar had drifted off by about ten days from the real solar year (roughly 1500 years at 11 mins/year). This meant people were celebrating the solstice ten days before it had actually happened.

That's why Pope Gregory XIII introduced the Gregorian calendar in 1582. Ten days were removed to bring the calendar back into line with the seasons. In Catholic countries, Thursday 4th October 1582 was followed by Friday 15th October 1582. A sort of bureaucratic time travel.

It wasn't perfect. Astronomically, the summer solstice now falls around 20 or 21 June. But culturally, the old midsummer date stayed where it was: eight days before the Kalends of July.

And that's what makes Sant Joan so interesting. It is a festival shaped by the sun, Roman counting, a slightly wonky calendar, a papal correction and centuries of people deciding that the best way to welcome summer is with fire, food and an unreasonable number of very loud bangs.



The Castellers of Sant Cugat

How the Gausacs build towers, trust and community



Víctor Biete: the proud president of the Castellers of Sant Cugat (aka the Gausacs)

At first glance, a castell looks like a human tower. Look again, and it becomes something more interesting: a carefully organised act of trust, courage and community.

For many international residents, the first encounter with the Castellers de Sant Cugat (nicknamed the Gausacs) is probably during a local festa. A crowd dressed in Collserola green gathers in the square. Musicians begin. Adults stand shoulder to shoulder. Children climb. The tower rises. When the child at the top raises a hand (the *aleta*) the castell has been crowned.

Víctor Biete, the Gausacs president, smiles when asked what we are really seeing. From the outside, he admits, it can look like “a bit of disorder, a bit of hustle and bustle”. But inside, everything is planned, calculated and rehearsed.

“At the end of the day,” he says, referring to philosopher Kevin Prados, “we are fighting gravity.”

Castells are not technically a sport. They are a cultural activity, recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. What amazes people is simple: ordinary people placing

themselves, one by one, on top of each other, challenging gravity in a public square.

“And to challenge gravity,” Víctor says, “you have to do it with organisation, rehearsal, safety rules and a lot of respect for the work you are doing.”

The tower the public sees for a few minutes is the result of hours of preparation, two rehearsals a week, weekend performances, and a volunteer network. Some prepare rehearsals, organise transport, deal with permissions, ambulances and bureaucracy, look after children, take photographs, play music or sell shirts and scarves.

For Víctor, they are all part of the castell. “Even a person who stays at home looking after one sibling so another can come to rehearsal - that family is also doing castells,” he says.

A castell has its own vocabulary. At the bottom is the *pinya*, the large base. Above that is the *tronc*, the visible body. At the top is the *pom de dalt*, formed by children, ending with the *enxaneta*, who reaches the summit and makes the *aleta*. And there are the musicians, because for the Gausacs, “if there is no music, it is not a castell.”



The Gausacs can number well over 200 people when they perform at home. Away from Sant Cugat, they may be closer to 140. Smaller castells come first; more ambitious ones need more people.

For Simply Sant Cugat readers, this is the key point: the Gausacs are not only a symbol of Catalan culture. They are also a doorway into local life.

The colla has included people from all over the world: Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Víctor mentions current members from Chile, Mexico, Italy and other countries. Historically, there have also been members from England, Scotland and Ireland.

Joining, he says, is almost the same for everyone, whether you were born in Sant Cugat or have just arrived from Japan, Germany or anywhere else.

The first lesson is safety. New members are taught where to stand in the *pinya*, how to protect themselves and others, and how the colla minimises risk. Víctor says the annual fall rate is around 3%, with serious injuries rare and comparable to many other physical activities.

But what keeps people coming back is not only technique. It is the people.

Before joining the Gausacs in 2011, Víctor played rugby. He had imagined that one day, perhaps in his fifties, he might try castells. In fact, he was only 21 when he walked through their door.

What struck him most was the mixture of ages.

"All my life, I had done activities with people my own age," he says. "Sport was separated by sex, and my friends were my age. Then suddenly you arrive here and find four-year-old children talking to people of fifty."

For Víctor, the colla is "a school of life". It teaches things that are hard to teach artificially: teamwork, commitment, responsibility and trust. If you go to rehearsal, you may become the 140th person who allows the other 139 to achieve something together.

His own story proves the point. When he joined, he says he was lost. He had left rugby, his job, his studies and moved home with his family. He was also shy. So, he joined their welcoming team.

"My therapy was to be the first person who had to go and say hello to someone new," he says.

Years later, that same person is now president.

His message to Sant Cugat's international community is simple: come and try. The Gausacs are proud defenders of Catalan, but Víctor is clear that newcomers are helped. You will find people from Mexico, England, Italy and France speaking Catalan as best they can, learning as they go.

"Castellers is a house that will always be there," he says. "A family. There will always be a place in the *pinya*, *un plat a taula* (a plate at the table) for everyone."

For anyone who has watched the green shirts from a safe distance and wondered whether this world is open to them, the answer from the Gausacs seems clear.

Yes. There is a place for you too.

How to Read a Castell

Castells have a simple code. In a '**3 de 8**', the first number tells you how many people are on each level of the *tronc* - the visible body of the tower. The second number tells you how many levels high it is. So, a 3 de 8 means: 3 people per level, 8 levels high.

Common forms

Pilar: 1 person per level

Torre / Dos: 2 per level

Tres: 3 per level

Quatre: 4 per level

Extra difficulty

Amb folre: with an extra support layer above the *pinya*

Amb manilles: with another support layer above the *folre*

Amb agulla: with a central pillar inside the structure

Record height

The tallest castells reach **10 levels**, such as the *3 de 10 amb folre i manilles* or *4 de 10 amb folre i manilles*.

Success or not?

Carregat: crowned, but falls before dismantling

Descarregat: crowned and safely dismantled - the full achievement.



LOCAL TIPS

Enjoying Sant Joan: Your Survival Checklist

How to make the most of the midsummer frivolities

For newcomers, Sant Joan can be somewhat bewildering. Fireworks at breakfast. Children carrying explosives with total impunity. Queues outside bakeries that go twice around the block.

But beneath the noise is the overarching idea that “tonight we are welcoming the summer”.

And because we think it's a lovely (and relatively noncommercialised) tradition, we thought you might like our Simply Sant Cugat checklist to optimise your aestival* celebrations.

❑ Buy coca nice and early

Leave it until the 23rd and your favourite bakery may already be sold out. The classic version has candied fruit and pine nuts, but cream, chocolate and even savoury versions exist, too.

❑ Expect fireworks... all day long

If you're new here, you may be surprised to discover the fireworks don't begin at night. Children often start setting off bangers as soon as they can get their little hands on them. Don't assume there is an emergency.

❑ Check your dog plan

This is probably the most important item for many Sant Cugat residents. Walk dogs early, keep them indoors later, close windows and consider music or doggy earmuffs.

❑ Choose your style of Sant Joan

- **Families:** early local *revetlla*, sparklers, then home before the big-bangs bonanza.
- **Couples:** coca + cava + evening walk.
- **Teenagers:** friends, fireworks and staying up too late.
- **Introverts:** balcony, bottle and book.

❑ Try a tiny ritual

Traditionally Sant Joan is linked to renewal. Write down something you want to leave behind and then throw it into the fire (just the paper, silly!)



❑ Consider an escape plan

A night away in a pleasant (quieter) part of Sant Cugat/Catalonia/Europe might just be what you need to keep your sleep-cycle under control.

❑ Prepare for late noise

The night runs late... very late especially as the following day's a holiday. Remember... earplugs are not surrender... they are a strategy.

One final thought... Sant Joan isn't really about fireworks (that's just an excuse). At its heart, it's a bridge between seasons. School ends. Summer begins. People shift down a gear. The longest days of the year are here... enjoy!

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* Vernal, Aestival, Autumnal and Hibernial: the Latin-based seasonal adjectives relating to spring, summer, autumn and winter

BONS MOTS

Embolica que Fa Fort**“What a palaver” in Sant Cugat style!**

If you spend long enough in Catalonia, sooner or later you will hear someone shrug their shoulders and enigmatically say:

“Embolica que fa fort...”

At first, it sounds completely obscure. Literally translated, it means something like:

“Wrap it makes it stronger.”

Which, admittedly, doesn’t make an awful lot of sense or help at all.

In reality, Catalans use it when a situation becomes increasingly complicated, chaotic, or out of control, especially when one problem leads directly to another.

For example...

1. You decide to repaint the living room. Simple enough.
2. But once the furniture is moved, you notice damp on the wall.
3. The damp turns out to be a leaking pipe.
4. So, you have to arrange for a plumber to come.
5. The plumber discovers old electrics.
6. Now, you have to find an electrician.
7. The electrician says the fuse box needs replacing.
8. The replacement requires permission from the community president.
9. The president is away until September.

At this point, a Catalan neighbour may solemnly nod and say: *“Embolica que fa fort.”*

In other words:

“Well... this is becoming quite a mess, isn’t it?” or “What a palaver!” as the Brits say.

The expression is fantastically flexible. It works for family life, local bureaucracy, school WhatsApp groups, Festa Major planning, or trying to organise a dinner for eight people.

It also captures a true lifeism: the resigned understanding that life rarely becomes simpler once more than one person gets involved.



A more familiar Sant Cugat version might go something like this:

“We’ll just have a quick beer.”

Then somebody orders food.

Then another round appears.

Then someone’s cousin joins.

Then suddenly it’s 9pm and your kids are skipping barefoot across Plaça Octavià.

Embolica que fa fort..





EVENTS

The New Sant Cugat Quiz Night

A family creating connections, one question at a time

Kim, Mike and their daughter: the new Quiz-night masters of Sant Cugat

When Kim and Mike moved here from South Africa in 2018, Sant Cugat quickly became home. A job transfer had brought their small family (just the three of them) to the area, and the town offered exactly the kind of setting they were looking for: an international school for their daughter, a welcoming environment, and what they describe as a “wonderful big town feel.”

Several years later, they are now enjoying helping other residents feel more at home, too.

Their monthly English-language quiz night began as a simple idea: create a relaxed social evening where people could meet, enjoy some food and drinks, and do something fun together. It was not designed as a business project. For Kim and Mike, it is a hobby and a community initiative where they have something to give. Their way of bringing people together in a town where many international residents are still finding their feet.

The inspiration came after they attended another quiz night. It was quite a drive from Sant Cugat, but

the evening was so much fun and stimulating that they both came away with the same thought: why not do it here?

Although they had never hosted quizzes before, they had attended many and understood the dynamics and principles. A good quiz night gives people a shared focus. It removes some of the awkwardness of meeting new people because there is always something to talk about - even if that something is the number of bones in the human body, the hottest planet in the solar system, or the answer that everyone is sure they know until the question is actually asked.

The format is simple. Guests reserve their place in advance by WhatsApping Kim directly. The quiz is usually played in teams of around four (although teams can be smaller or larger depending on the evening). Individuals are also welcome and can join a team on arrival. There is a 5€ participation fee, which helps cover prizes and quiz equipment, while food and drinks are ordered directly from the restaurant.



The venue varies from time to time, partly to keep the experience fresh and partly to encourage people to discover local restaurants they may not have tried before. The next quiz night is the “Final Quiz Frenzy Before Summer Break”, which will take place on Thursday, 11th June at 7:30 pm at Tragaldabas Restaurant, on c/ Castillejos 30.

So far, around 20 people have been attending, but Kim and Mike hope the quiz will continue to grow. The first participants were mainly friends, acquaintances and parents from the international school community, but word of mouth has already started to broaden the group. They hope that the evening becomes increasingly diverse, welcoming not only native English speakers but anyone who can speak and understand English and would enjoy taking part.

That openness is important to them. The questions are chosen carefully so that no one group has an unfair advantage. Rather than focusing too heavily on one country, culture or generation, the quiz aims to be international, varied and accessible - someone from Canada would have no advantage over someone from Corfu. Kim looks for questions from a range of sources, including the internet, quiz shows, current news, and general knowledge, with a mixture of challenge, interest, and “ah-ha” moments.

The atmosphere they are trying to create is relaxed, sociable and just a teeny-weeny bit competitive. There are genuine prizes, of course, and people do want to win, but the real aim is to create a great evening full of conversation, laughter and friendly banter. Mike, as quiz master, helps bring the teams together and makes the room feel less like separate tables and more like one large group of friends meeting for a night out.

Kim and Mike have also hosted a kids’ quiz. The first family version took place on a Sunday afternoon and included questions for different ages, from fairytales and general knowledge to Gen Z slang. There were also mini-games, including guessing the number of sweets in a jar and a drawing competition (unbiasedly judged by the

restaurant staff). The children were clearly impressed: according to Kim, some gave “firm instructions” that there should be another one.

Although there will not be a family quiz in June, it is clearly part of the wider spirit behind the project. Under the name Community Connect, Kim and Mike see the quiz events as only the beginning. They have already set up a WhatsApp broadcast group for invitations and reminders, as well as an Instagram account, and they have other ideas for future activities involving both local and international residents.

For now, though, the focus is on building the monthly quiz into a regular part of Sant Cugat’s English-speaking social calendar. If people leave having enjoyed good food, met someone new, laughed at a few questions and looked forward to coming back, then for Kim and Mike, the evening has done exactly what it was meant to do.

How to Join the Quiz

Next quiz: Thursday, 11th June, 7:30 pm

Venue: Tragaldabas, c/ Castillejos 30

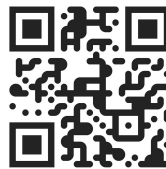
Entry: 5€ per person (covers prizes)

Teams: Ideally four people, but individuals are welcome

Food & drink: Available from the venue

Booking: WhatsApp Kim on 680 85 26 57

Instagram: @comm_unityconnect



Join our magazine’s announcement group and stay in the loop on information about quiz nights, meet-ups, cultural activities and community news.



NEW RESTAURANT REVIEW

Casa Mushiki: Mira-sol's New All-day Asian Restaurant

by Sharon Biggar

Editor's note: Our restaurant reviews are genuine, independent and undercover. We pay for our meals, accept no freebies, and do not tell the staff we are reviewers. That way, we experience each restaurant just like any other customer.

Mira-sol is a tough spot to be a restaurant. Over the past few years the corner space, above the train station and next to Turris, has churned through more food concepts than I care to count. Now **Casa Mushiki** has taken over, and I hope this one sticks. Here's why.

First, the practical magic: it's open all day. For expats who've just landed (or any of us still making the cultural transition to local mealtimes) Casa Mushiki is a small miracle. Show up at 3pm, 6pm, or whenever hunger strikes, and they will feed you.

Second, struggling to find a place that feeds your toddlers, teenagers and *tías*? This is it.

The menu covers a broad range of Asian dishes including **maki**, **nigiri**, **temaki**, **California rolls**, **rice dishes**, **noodles** and hot plates such as **Thai Curry** and **Beef Teppanyaki**. We had perfectly **salted edamame**, **miso soup** (with real miso), **fresh sushi**, **gyozas**, and **sweet and sour chicken** with just the right balance of crunch and sauce.

But the desserts stole the show: **Té Matcha ice cream** for the Instagram teenager who won't eat anything an influencer hasn't pre-approved, **Nutella Mochi** for the 9-year-old, and an exquisite **Lemon Pie** in a glass (yes, in a glass) - an unexpected but delicious addition to the menu.

The harshest critics are often the kids, so what did my daughter have to say? "It was really yummy."

Lastly, the space deserves its own paragraph. Comfortable furniture - and I mean properly comfortable, not the stylish-but-secretly-punishing kind. And for the summer that's surely coming (right?), the terrace is enormous, shady, and made for a leisurely weekend lunch.



At 104€ for four (sans wine) it's a little pricey, but the food, setting, and hours justify it.

My only caveat? It was quiet. Pleasant for conversation, less so for atmosphere.

Sant Cugat, help us out here! Next time you want dinner at the "early" hour of 19:30, skip McDonald's or Vienna, and give this one a try. I promise you won't regret it.

Casa Mushiki

Pl. d'Ausiàs March, 1 (Mira-sol Shopping Centre)

Tue to Thu: 12:00-23:00

Fri to Sun: 13:00-23:30

(closed Mondays)

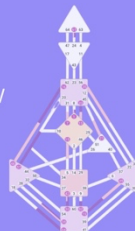
Get to know your birth chart!

Discover your potential, your talents, how to navigate the world in the best way, and how others perceive you.

Contact me for a personal session:

📞 Julia - via Whatsapp: **+34 611 887 834**

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INFORMATION NOTICEBOARD

Know Someone We Should Meet?

Simply Sant Cugat is built by the community, for the community.

Do you have a story, article idea or local experience to share? We'd love to hear it.

We're also always looking to meet those fascinating people who are doing amazing things... volunteers, entrepreneurs, artists, organisers, local heroes and community builders.

If you know someone interesting (or are that person!), get in touch.

info@simplysantcugat.com

Sant Cugat Toastmasters Club

Mondays: June 1st & 15th
7:15–9:00 pm · Casa de Cultura

Improve your **public speaking** and **leadership** skills in a friendly, bilingual (English / Spanish) environment. Practise, gain confidence, and connect.

Optional social meetup afterwards.

Info: toastmasterssantcugat@gmail.com

Non-members are very welcome.

Your voice matters - start today!

XDESC: The Professional Women's Network

SUMMER DINNER XDESC 2026!

Thursday, 11th July at 8:30 pm

We invite you to our Summer Dinner.

An evening for women entrepreneurs and business owners to connect and celebrate the start of summer together.

This dinner is open to members and non-members.

Follow us on Instagram for location details.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Follow XDESC on Instagram: @xdescsc

www.xarxaemprenedoressc.cat

★ QUIZ NIGHT ★

Think you know your stuff?

Gather a team, grab a drink and join one of Sant Cugat's friendliest quiz nights.

Expect laughs, lively competition and a great community atmosphere in English at

Tragaldabas Restaurant

c. Castillejos, 30

Thursday, 11th June, 7:30 pm.

Teams of four are ideal, but solo players are warmly welcomed, too.

Entry is just 5€ per person.

Book via WhatsApp

680 85 26 57

SIMPLY FOR KIDS

FIND GIMBY

Hello again!

This month, little Gimby is a bit worried about all the loud firework bangs. So, he's decided to find a quiet corner until things calm down a bit.

Can you find him hiding in this month's magazine?

(answer on page 29)



Gimby

SIMPLY COLOUR

Pau, Anna and Maria have decided to follow tradition and celebrate Sant Joan by building a bonfire using a few things from home. Can you make it even more exciting by adding some colour?



Simply Jokes

This month, Penelope, has found her sunniest, summer jokes!
Can you tell which questions go with which answers?



CULTURE CORNER

Don't Go Anywhere: Festa Major is Here

A quick look at what's happening 25th-29th June

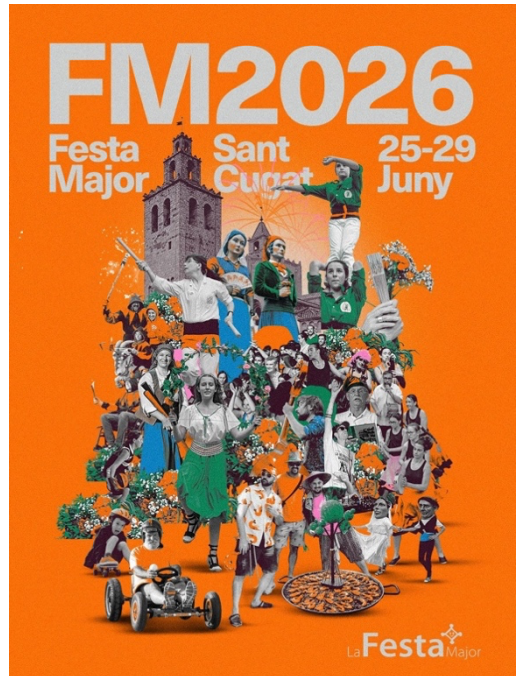
If you are even thinking about heading off on a trip in late June, stop right there. Every year, Sant Cugat delivers its annual festival and every year it is bigger and better.

The Festa Major celebrates Sant Pere, the town's patron saint, whose feast day falls on **Monday 29th June** stretching the festival an extra day this year to five full days of music, food and street life in squares and parks across town with **over 200 activities from 82 organisations** and a daily programme that runs from morning to well past midnight. This is not something you want to read about from a sun lounger somewhere else.

The festival opens on Thursday with the **Ball d'Envelat** at Plaça d'Octavià. Music is the obvious headliner. And it's all free. **The Tyets, Ginestà and Fetus** top a bill that spans **64 live performances including bands, orchestras, choirs, karaoke, swing, jazz and havaneres**. Friday is the big night with **The Tyets** at high voltage, **De Mortimers** returning with their live karaoke and **Please** delivering a U2 tribute. Jazz fans should head to Plaça de Can Quitèria and look out for **Colina Miralta Sambeat Trio** and **Alba Careta Group**. Also we will have **flamenco** at the Modernist Celler and, appropriately in this location, **a wine tasting**.

Yet music is only part of the story. The streets will fill with **Correfocs** and dances from the **Gegants, Bastoners** and **Sardanes**. On Saturday afternoon, the **Castellers de Sant Cugat**, the Gausacs, will raise their human towers in Plaça d'Octavià alongside the Terrassa and Vendrell groups. A spectacle not to be missed, and buy yourself a green T-shirt to show you belong!

Sunday 28th June brings the **Concurs d'Arrossos**, the paella competition that sees hundreds of groups cook rice over wood fires on the kerbside. It's a lot harder than you think. On Monday night, the **Paga-li Joan** dance, the **Ball del Vano i el Ram**, fills the



Hort de l'Abat with flowers, fans and traditional costume in a dance ritual that has been passed between generations for centuries. And to bring the whole thing to a close the most spectacular **fireworks** go off at 11 pm from Parc del Turó de Can Mates. But you can watch them from anywhere in Sant Cugat.

The **full programme will be published on 15th June** on the ajuntament website and on posters around town. Pick your highlights and plan your days. But the most important decision is the one to make right now: stay put and enjoy one of the finest weeks this town has to offer.

More information
<https://santcugat.cat>



CASA PARRA

Peruvian Fusion Cuisine, Five Centuries in the Making

By Carolina Parra

When people ask me what Peruvian food is, I never know where to begin. It is not one thing. It is a whole history on a plate.

Peru has always been a meeting place: mountains, coast, jungle, ancient civilisations, colonisation, migration, invention and celebration. Long before the Spanish arrived, Andean communities were cultivating potatoes, maize, quinoa and ají peppers in conditions that would defeat most farmers. The Pacific gave us fish and seafood, and from these ingredients came dishes such as causa and ceviche - simple in appearance, but full of memory.

Then other cultures arrived, and Peruvian food changed without losing itself. Spanish ingredients mixed with local traditions and gave us dishes like ají de gallina. African influence brought anticuchos and tacu tacu: food born from resourcefulness, generosity and the ability to make something wonderful from very little.

Later, Chinese immigrants brought wok cooking, soy sauce and new ways of combining flavours. This became chifa, one of Peru's great culinary treasures. Lomo saltado is perhaps the perfect example: beef, onions, tomatoes, ají and soy sauce, cooked quickly and served with rice and chips. It should not make sense, but it absolutely does.

Japanese immigration added another layer, especially in the way we treat fish. Nikkei cooking helped transform ceviche and raw fish dishes into something more delicate, precise and internationally admired.

For me, this is the beauty of Peruvian cuisine. It is not fusion created as a fashion. It is fusion created by real lives: people arriving, adapting, remembering, sharing and surviving. Every dish carries a little piece of that journey.

That is the spirit I try to bring to Casa Parra, here in Sant Cugat. Of course, we serve Peruvian flavours - causa, ceviche, bocatas, desserts and dishes with Mediterranean or Asian touches - but for me the restaurant is also a small cultural space. On the walls, we have work by contemporary Peruvian artists. Sometimes there is live music. There is colour, conversation and a little bit of home.



When I cook, I am not only thinking about ingredients. I am thinking about family, markets, music, artists and all the people who helped build this extraordinary table over centuries.

That is what I hope people discover: not just a meal, but a story.





Sant Cugat's Housing Debate

Success, growth and the question of who can still afford to live here - by Àlex Ballesta

Many people living in Sant Cugat describe the city as the ideal compromise: close enough to Barcelona to enjoy the opportunities of a global city, but far enough away to offer greenery, space and a calmer pace of life.

For decades, that formula worked remarkably well. Sant Cugat became one of the most desirable municipalities in Catalonia, attracting families, professionals and international companies alike. Today, however, that success has created what many residents now see as the city's biggest long-term challenge: housing.

Walk through the centre on a Saturday morning and it is easy to understand why demand is so high. Excellent schools, low crime, extensive green areas, strong public transport connections and a lively cultural scene have helped make Sant Cugat enormously attractive both to locals and newcomers.

The problem is that demand has increasingly outpaced supply.

Estate agents operating in the area frequently describe situations where multiple families compete for the same rental property within days of it appearing online. In some parts of the city, especially near the centre and FGC stations, affordable properties can attract dozens of enquiries almost immediately.

The result has been a steady rise in both rental and purchase prices. According to market estimates, average property prices in Sant Cugat have more than doubled over the last 15 to 20 years, with prime central areas now commonly exceeding 5,000€–6,500€ per square metre. In practice, that means a typical three-bedroom flat in the centre can now cost well above 500,000€, while family homes regularly reach seven figures.

Although housing prices have risen across much of Spain, the increase in Sant Cugat more closely resembles trends seen in highly desirable international cities such as Barcelona, London or Paris, where strong demand and limited space have



gradually pushed middle-income residents further away from central areas.

For younger local families, the challenge is increasingly obvious. Many people who grew up in Sant Cugat now find themselves unable to afford to buy in the neighbourhoods where they were raised. Others remain living with parents for longer or move to more affordable towns further from Barcelona.

At the same time, many international residents face similar difficulties. While some highly paid professionals relocating for multinational companies can compete for premium housing, many others arriving from abroad quickly discover that Sant Cugat's reputation comes with a price tag that is difficult to manage even on relatively strong salaries.

In this sense, Sant Cugat has become something of a victim of its own success.

The city's attractiveness is not accidental. International schools, technology companies, business parks and excellent transport links have helped create a highly educated, internationally connected local economy. That success brings jobs, spending power, cultural diversity and economic dynamism. It also brings more people wanting to live here.

Housing supply, however, has not expanded at the same pace.

This has produced the central political debate now shaping much of local discussion: should Sant



Cugat continue growing significantly, or should it prioritise preserving the qualities that made the city attractive in the first place?

Broadly speaking, two visions dominate the debate.

One side argues that the city simply needs more housing. Supporters of this position believe that without substantially increasing supply - especially affordable and public housing - prices will continue rising beyond the reach of average residents.

Advocates for growth generally support new residential developments, higher-density construction in some areas and faster urban planning procedures. They argue that if demand continues increasing while construction remains limited, affordability will inevitably worsen.

The opposing vision is more cautious about expansion. For many residents, the issue is not simply how many homes are built, but what kind of city Sant Cugat should become over the next twenty years.

Part of Sant Cugat's appeal lies precisely in its lower-density character compared to Barcelona. Wide avenues, parks, detached homes and access to nature are often seen as essential to the city's identity. Critics of aggressive development fear that excessive expansion could gradually erode the very qualities that made people want to live here in the first place.

Environmental concerns also play an important role. Sant Cugat borders Collserola Natural Park, one of the largest protected natural spaces near a major European city. Any proposed expansion near these zones tends to generate strong debate, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas.

As often happens in politics, the reality is more nuanced than a simple "build versus don't build" argument.

Most political parties represented in the local council agree that housing affordability has become a serious issue. The disagreement lies mainly in how far the city should grow, how quickly it should grow and what balance should exist between density and quality of life.

Left-wing parties such as En Comú Podem and CUP generally support stronger public intervention in the housing market and a larger supply of affordable housing. Junts, which currently leads the local government, acknowledges the seriousness of the issue while tending to prioritise preserving Sant Cugat's existing urban model.

Meanwhile, PSC and Esquerra Republicana broadly argue that the city must adapt to modern realities while remaining recognisably Sant Cugat. PP and Vox tend to favour greater market liberalisation and fewer planning restrictions to stimulate construction.

For many residents, the debate has become about something larger than housing alone. Questions about transport, sustainability, public services, neighbourhood identity and social cohesion are increasingly tied to the discussion.

The uncomfortable reality is that many people now agree on two things simultaneously: Sant Cugat remains an exceptional place to live, and that very desirability is making it harder for an increasing number of people to stay.

Like many successful towns and cities across Europe, Sant Cugat now faces a difficult question. How do you remain open, dynamic and economically successful without gradually becoming accessible only to the wealthy?

And perhaps the most difficult question of all: if the teachers, young families, local workers and even many international professionals who give Sant Cugat much of its daily life can no longer afford to live here, what kind of city does it eventually become?

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How to Ride a Bicycle Like a Local

by Marshal Montgomery

With summer approaching, many new ecologically minded residents will soon be tempted to embrace the idea of cycling around Sant Cugat. After all, we have more cycle lanes than you can wave a stick at. But for the innocent newcomer, I feel a personal sense of duty to address a curious fact.

According to my own direct observations, Sant Cugat has its own alternative microverse when it comes to cycling laws. I am not a legal expert. In fact, I have no idea what the cycling laws are in Sant Cugat, but every single day I witness large numbers of apparently cheerful, law-abiding citizens, who I can only assume are happily ignoring them.

Red lights

In many countries, cyclists treat red lights as an instruction to stop. Here, they sometimes seem to function more as existential philosophy. The local approach appears to be:

"If nobody dies, was it really red?" See for yourself. Cyclists go through them with no repercussions whatsoever. I have even seen cute little red lights specifically for cyclists and the same rule applies.

Speed limits

Some claim the speed limit for bicycles in Collserola is 20 km/h and they are only allowed on the wide paths. I've even been told that cyclists are expected to give priority to pedestrians. Ha! My arse they are!

I've seen cyclists descend the mountain on single tracks at speeds usually associated with low-flying military aircraft. Walkers scatter into bushes. Elderly couples clutch each other in terror as a blur of MAMIL's fly past*.

Cycle lanes

Sant Cugat has invested well over a million euros on wonderful, wide and well-lit cycle lanes. Some even with pretty flower beds alongside. Why, I've no idea. Since from observation, it's obvious that most cyclists prefer to hold up the traffic rather than use them. Why go on a cycle lane and contend with



Marshal Montgomery: Responsible Sant Cugat cyclist

skateboarders, prams and joggers when you can annoy hundreds of law-abiding motorists?

Formation cycling

In other parts of Catalonia, cyclists are generally expected to ride in single file on roads. Not here! I'm starting to deduce there are cyclists who find it jolly fun to go out and intentionally hold up the traffic by riding 2, 3 or more abreast while having a nice chat. (Especially Sunday mornings when I am driving over the mountain to avoid those damn toll fees). Oh, how they laugh when they see my frustrated face! Seriously, I have photos!

Of course, when done responsibly, cycling really is one of the best ways to enjoy Sant Cugat and the surrounding area. The town is relatively bicycle-friendly, the weather is ideal, and Collserola (when it finally re-opens) offers some genuinely spectacular on and off-road routes.

So just remember:

- Red lights may or may not really exist.
- Speed is apparently relative.
- Single file is interpreted creatively.
- Cycle lanes are anything but!

Welcome to cycling in Sant Cugat. Stay hydrated, stay alert, and never underestimate the power of denial of someone wearing fluorescent Lycra.

*MAMIL (n) = Middle-Aged Men in Lycra



BILINGUAL SHORT STORY

The Evening of Sant Joan – La Nit de Sant Joan

by Richard Wilkinson

On the evening of Sant Joan, Paula and Marc were sent to the park with one strict instruction from their busy mother: be back **before** the fireworks started.

She said it while loading the washing-machine, without looking up. **Once again**, she looked sad and tired.

When they got to the park, Paula and Marc found a **key**. It was tied to a tree with a red ribbon. Attached to it was a note:

For the one who dares to look.

Marc wanted to leave it alone immediately. Paula, naturally, didn't.

They searched the park for what the key might open. The **park gate**? No. The gardener's shed? No. The old fountain? Definitely not.

Then, behind the hedge near the ping-pong tables, Paula spotted a tiny wooden door set into the wall. They had passed it a hundred times **without noticing it**.

The key fit perfectly.

Inside was not treasure, exactly. Just a small tin box. Marc opened it.

In it were **dozens** of folded notes, all written by children from years before. One said, "I hope my parents stop arguing." Another, "**I want a dog.**" A third, I need to be braver.

At the bottom lay a blank piece of paper and an old pencil. Paula looked at Marc. "**What would you write?**" He thought for a moment, then wrote:

I hope Mum laughs again.

Paula wrote nothing. She only nodded.

They put the paper in the box, locked the door, and ran home just as the first firework **burst** in the sky.

That night, as they watched from Paula's **window**, the sky flashed red and gold, and then they heard something they had not heard in a long time.

The **sound** of laughter coming from **downstairs**.

La nit de Sant Joan, la Paula i en Marc van anar al parc amb una única instrucció ben clara de la seva mare, que anava molt atregada: tornar **abans** que comencessin els focs artificials.

Els ho va dir mentre posava la rentadora, sense ni alçar la vista. **Un cop més**, feia cara de trista i cansada.

Quan van arribar al parc, la Paula i en Marc van trobar una **clau**. Estava lligada a un arbre amb una cinta vermella. Hi havia una nota enganxada que deia:

Per a qui s'atreveixi a buscar.

En Marc va voler deixar-ho estar de seguida. La Paula, és clar, no.

Van buscar per tot el parc què podia obrir aquella clau. La **porta del parc**? No. El cobert del jardiner? No. La font vella? Definitivament no.

Llavors, darrere la tanca prop de les taules de ping-pong, la Paula va veure una porteta de fusta diminuta encastada a la paret. Hi havien passat per davant cent vegades **sense adonar-se'n**.

La clau hi encaixava perfectament.

A dins no hi havia ben bé un tresor. Només una capseta metàl·lica.

En Marc la va obrir.

A dins hi havia **desenes** de notes plegades, totes escrites per nens i nenes d'anys enrere. En una hi deia: «Espero que els meus pares deixin de discutir.» En una altra: «**Vull un gos.**» En una tercera: «Necessito ser més valenta.»

Al fons hi havia un paper en blanc i un llapis vell. La Paula va mirar en Marc.

—**Tu què hi escriuries?**

Ell s'ho va pensar un moment i després va escriure:

Espero que la mare torni a riure.

La Paula no va escriure res. Només va assentir.

Van tornar a deixar el paper dins la capsa, van tancar la porteta amb clau i van córrer cap a casa just quan el primer foc artificial **esclatava** al cel.

Aquella nit, mentre miraven des de la **finestra** de la Paula, el cel es tenyia de vermell i or, i llavors van sentir una cosa que feia molt de temps que no sentien.

El **so** d'un riure que pujava del **pis de baix**.



SIMPLY SPORT

The Tour de France Comes to Catalonia

A Historic Grand Départ with Local Impact - by Adam Goldthorp

As a keen cyclist, I am delighted that the 113th edition of the world's most prestigious cycling race will begin in the Catalan capital on 4th July, marking a significant milestone both for the city and for the race itself.

For a Sant Cugat cyclist, this is a rare opportunity to experience the opening moments of the Tour within easy reach of home. The event will not only transform Barcelona but is expected to create a broader regional atmosphere, drawing visitors and locals alike into what is effectively a week-long cycling celebration.

A Three-Day Opening in Catalonia

The opening of the 2026 Tour de France (4th to 6th July) will be in Catalonia. During this period, Barcelona and the wider metropolitan area will become the global centre of cycling, attracting elite riders, international media and thousands of spectators from all over the world.

The first stage, on Saturday 4th, will take place entirely within Barcelona and will be a 20-kilometre team time trial. This stage will start near the *Parc del Fòrum* on the north side of Barcelona. It will pass through city landmarks such as the Sagrada Família before climbing to Montjuïc, where the finish line will be located at the Olympic Stadium.

I will be taking a train from Sant Cugat to Barcelona. I am still deciding whether to watch the start or the finish.

Both will be spectacular.

Speed is the main consideration. On the straights, they cycle over 60kph; you need to watch from a bend or hill to see more than a blur.

The second stage, on Sunday 5th July, begins in Tarragona and covers 178 kms before finishing again in Barcelona. The route hugs the coast, passing through Sitges and Castelldefels before



Adam Goldthorp (centre) is keen cyclist.

turning inland and finishing with several laps around Montjuïc. This is when it is closest to us in Sant Cugat as it goes through Molins de Rei into the Collserola and back down into Barcelona. The original plan was to go through Sant Cugat and the Collserola, but this was scrapped by the local authorities because of the pig flu. The ascents from Tarragona will likely create early differences among the leading contenders and decide who wears the yellow jersey next.

For sure, I will be in Montjuïc to see them multiple times climbing, it will be busy but full of atmosphere and there is always room by the roadside.

On the 6th, the third stage will start from Granollers, 40 kms inland from Sant Cugat, before the race heads towards the Pyrenees and crosses into France. This is an opportunity to see the start up close and personal as the riders prepare, as it is a Monday, and will be less busy. Granollers is also a nice place to spend the rest of the day.



Barcelona's Sporting Legacy

Barcelona's role as host of the Grand Départ adds to its long-standing reputation as a global sports city. Football and the 1992 Olympics of course, but also Formula 1 and last year the America's Cup as well as many international competitions across different sports.

The inclusion of Montjuïc as a central feature of the route is particularly symbolic. The hill has hosted numerous cycling competitions and was a key venue during the 1992 Olympics, as well as in races such as the Vuelta a España and the Volta a Catalunya.

A Global Event with Local Benefits

The Tour de France is one of the most widely followed sporting events in the world, bringing significant international exposure and economic activity to host regions.

For the Barcelona metropolitan area, this will likely translate into increased tourism, busy transport networks and a vibrant atmosphere across the region not to mention thousands of visiting amateur cyclists out on the road tracking the same tour routes before and after the competition. Hotels will fill quickly, and the seafront and Montjuïc, will experience road closures and large-scale public gatherings.

In the days leading up to the race, the official presentation of teams will also take place in Barcelona, adding to the sense of anticipation and bringing international cycling stars into close contact with fans.

The Bigger Picture of the 2026 Tour

The 2026 Tour runs from 4th to 26th July, covering 3,300 kms across 21 stages and finishing in Paris on the Champs-Élysées.

After leaving Catalonia, the race will move through France, including challenging stages in the Pyrenees and the Alps. However, the opening days in Barcelona are expected to play an important role

in shaping the early standings, particularly with the inclusion of a team time trial and the demanding climbs of Montjuïc.

A Rare Local Opportunity

For residents of Sant Cugat, the arrival of the Tour de France represents a rare and unique opportunity. Watching the world's best cyclists compete just a short distance from home offers a perspective that television cannot replicate.

I will be at the presentation on Thursday, the team time trial on Saturday, the stage on Sunday and hopefully a chance to meet some of my idols on Monday as well. Whether viewed from the slopes of Montjuïc, along the beachfront, or even experienced indirectly through the buzz that will spread across the region, the Grand Depart of 2026 will be a landmark moment not to be missed.



Insider Tips for Watching the Tour

1. **Go early and pack a picnic:** This isn't a 5-minute race. Roads close hours before and the best spots (especially on Montjuïc) fill fast.
2. **Do your research:** Unless you are a regular Tour fan, the enjoyment is enhanced if you read about the favourites, the characters, the teams, the sponsors and the Yellow Jersey.
3. **Catch the Caravan:** Up to two hours before the riders, a vibrant parade of sponsor vehicles rolls through, blasting music and throwing freebies. It's been part of the Tour since 1930.
4. **Pick your moment:** Climbs = slower speeds and better views. Flat roads? Blink and you'll miss it.
5. **Stay safe:** Keep off the road and follow official guidance at all times.
6. **Plan your exit:** Getting out can take longer than the race - embrace the atmosphere and enjoy it.

Simple Bilingual Crossword

Time to test your vocabulary!

Meet our Bilingual Crossword - a fun way to practise English and Catalan without it feeling like homework.

Across (Horizontals): the clues are in Catalan, and the answers are the English translations.

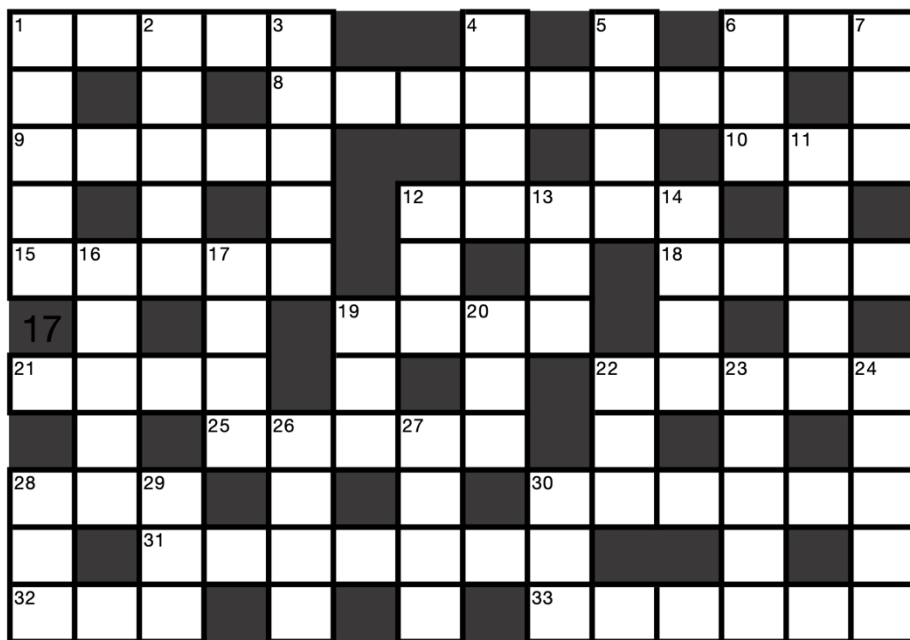
Down (Verticals): the clues are in English, and the answers are the Catalan translations.

You don't need to be "good at crosswords" to enjoy it. Start with the words you already know, use the grid to help you guess the rest, and let a few new words sneak into your vocabulary. Do it solo with a coffee, or turn it into a mini-challenge with a friend (or a patient family member).

Most of all: expect a few "Ohhh, that's how you say it!" moments - which is the best kind of learning.

Horizontals (Across): 1. Ho fas amb un dit 6. Ho fas amb el cap 8. On entres 9. Regne 10. Aquesta pista 12. Berenar d'esquirol 15. Cotxes americans 18. Menja 19. Agència amb molta espai? 21. Ingredient de truita 22. Precís 25. Inserir dades 28. Boig 30. Desfilada 31. Implicar 32. Deixar, permetre o logar 33. Lents

Down (Verticals): 1. Carries a door? 2. Magnet 3. Topics 4. Therefore I am? 5. Go 6. Clean 7. Skill or gift 11. I am 12. Wing 13. Wave 14. Is born 16. Nail 17. Desert refreshment 19. Turnip 20. A number of dwarves? 22. Was 23. B4? 24. They run on rails 26. It snows 27. Eyes



Across/Horizontals: 1. Point 6. Nod 8. Entrance 9. Realm 10. Ten 12. Acorn 15. Autos 18. Fats 19. Nasa 21. Eggs 22. Exact 25. Input 28. Mad 30. Parade 31. Involve 32. Let 33. Lenses
Down/Verticals: 1. Porta 2. Imant 3. Temes 4. Creu 5. Andar 6. Net 7. Don 11. Estic 12. Ala 13. Ona 14. Netx 16. Ungla 17. Oast 19. Nop 20. Set 22. Era 23. Abans 24. Tren 26. Neva 27. Ulls



HAIRY HENRY'S (TOTALLY RELIABLE) HOROSCOPE

100% June... 100% accurate... 100% Hairy Henry

Aries (21st Mar – 19th Apr)

You feel overworked and underpaid. Rebalance your life by prioritising letters over numbers. Rediscover forgotten pleasures. A coloured bird will bring you a gift. There's a K that needs your attention.

Taurus (20th April – 20th May)

In some way, age is getting in the way. Don't allow it. This month, focus on improving your Tuesdays and Thursdays. Someone will try to take something from you without your permission. Be alert. Be helpful. Be awesome.

Gemini (21st May – 21st Jun)

June will bring an extra impulse to travel. Go for it. Say hello to 3 strangers every day. The word 'hypo', or 'hyper', or 'hippo' is key to a much-needed breakthrough. Be more mindful of your feet.

Cancer (22nd Jun – 22nd Jul)

Do not ask for whom the bell tolls. It's your phone ringing. You will have a pleasurable encounter with spirits. Spend a whole day without speaking and enjoy the experience. Clean the car.

Leo (23rd Jul – 22nd Aug)

Questions, questions, questions. But not so many answers. A yellow flower will guide you to a happy encounter, possibly near a tree, possibly next to the freezer. You will run out of a metaphysical necessity. And then realise you didn't need it anyway. Chill out.

Virgo (23rd Aug – 22nd Sep)

An illusive song will influence your decision-making. A small woman with a walking aid will be of unexpected help. The beginning of June is the best time to buy paper. Leave things in a better state than you found them. Try a new fruit juice.

Libra (23rd Sep – 23rd Oct)

It's time to make that leap of faith and bite the bull's horns. This month, crabs will be a dilemma. See a doctor if necessary. You will find something unsettling between your toes. Master your energy surges.

Scorpio (24th Oct – 21st Nov)

A good month for nostalgia. Especially your bank statement from last year. Pay more attention to colours when you shop. Try to incorporate dance routines into domestic chores.

Sagittarius (22nd Nov – 21st Dec)

Six will encroach in all things this month in a disconcerting manner. A sudden loss of energy will only exacerbate things. Wear something green each day. Expect a surprise around Sant Joan.

Capricorn (22nd Dec – 19th Jan)

A health specialist will try to tell you something that doesn't benefit you. Flow. Mint and vanilla are your guide this month. Find a new way to have fun in lifts. Use vinegar as a weapon.

Aquarius (20th Jan – 18th Feb)

Your inhibitions are holding you back. Don't worry what others will think, let your hair down. This month, work is a 4-letter word, along with clog and teal. Avoid overexerting yourself. Experiment with being more mysterious at home.

Pisces (19th Feb – 20th Mar)

It's time to get rid of that thing you've been meaning to lose for the last few months. In fact, why not declutter a whole room? Celebrate space. Ginger will find a way of encroaching into your life. Look under tables more often.



SANT MIQUEL DEL FAI

Catalonia's answer to Rivendell?



Panoramic photo from the initial entrance to Sant Miquel del Fai

Some places are beautiful. Some places are impressive. And then there are places that make you stop halfway down a path and simply say: Oh, my days!

For us, Sant Miquel del Fai is one of those places.

My wife and I visited in mid-May, returning after several years away. We had been before, but this visit felt special. The place had been closed since 2018 while major restoration works were carried out, and we were curious to see what had changed.

The verdict? The restoration has been excellent.

The visit now requires an online reservation (including parking), which is completely free. At first this might sound annoying, but it quickly becomes clear why it exists. Visitor numbers are sensibly controlled, helping protect the site and keeping the experience enjoyable. Those without reservations have to sit and wait patiently until space becomes available.

And this is a place worth preserving.

The drive itself is part of the experience. Leaving Sant Cugat behind, the journey takes around forty minutes and becomes steadily more dramatic as you approach the gorge carved into the rock over hundreds of thousands of years. The landscape tightens. The cliffs rise. You begin to feel you are entering somewhere different, somewhere special.

From the car park, visitors cross an old stone bridge and follow a path descending between huge rock walls like something from Indiana Jones.

Then suddenly it appears before you.

Waterfalls. Streams. Crystal-clear pools. Vast cliff faces. Dense greenery clinging improbably to the stone. Paths winding beneath overhangs. Water dripping gently from overhead foliage.



The closest comparison we could think of was Rivendell from *The Lord of the Rings*. If Tolkien had imagined an elven refuge in Catalonia, it would have looked something like this.

The route follows a beautifully maintained streamlet running beside the path before reaching an old stone building perched precariously on the cliff's edge serving as a second entrance. Once through, the scenery becomes almost theatrical.



Sometimes the water crashes dramatically down the rock face as majestic waterfalls. Elsewhere, it appears as a charming curtain of droplets falling from above.

The cliffs themselves tell another story. Over millennia, water has sculpted the rock into caves, formations and strange shapes. Stalactites and stalagmites appear throughout the route, reminders that nature has been constantly creating art here for far longer than people have been visiting.

History, though, is everywhere too.

Sant Miquel del Fai is not simply a natural beauty spot. It is also a thousand-year-old historic site. References to the area date back to the 9th century, while the monastery itself emerged around the end of the 10th century.

The old church, built directly into the rock face, remains one of the highlights of the visit.

There is something remarkable about seeing it there: ancient stone seemingly growing out of the cliff itself. It feels less built than discovered.

Over the centuries the site has been a monastery, religious retreat, military post, tourist destination and now a restored public heritage space under the care of the *Diputació de Barcelona*.

The restoration deserves real credit.

Modern visitor facilities have been added without overwhelming the charm of the place. Information panels are clear, helpful and discreet. There is even a small cinema area explaining the history and geology of the site with drone footage.

Importantly, the atmosphere remains intact.

Not everything was perfect, however.

The caves were unfortunately still closed for renovation during our visit, as was the former bar and picnic area which we had enjoyed on previous trips. We were quite disappointed about that.

And then there are the new 'ecological' toilets.

In a location containing more falling water than seems physically reasonable, the environmentally friendly toilets operate without any water at all. Instead, visitors are invited to use sawdust and tact.

This might be quaint and charming if you are among the day's early arrivals. Perhaps somewhat less quaint and charming later in the afternoon.

Still, it somehow feels appropriate. Sant Miquel del Fai is very much a place where nature sets the rules.

One small local legend also caught our attention. The Llac de les Monges (Nun's Lake) is a crystal-clear, icy-cold pond squeezed under megatons of



Photos do not do the view justice

primordial rock and was reserved for 'naughty' nuns some of whom were transformed into fish, seriously.

We decided not to investigate too deeply.

Our visit slot lasted two hours, which felt about right, especially with absence of a working bar. We left wishing we had brought a picnic.

If you go, our advice is simple: book ahead, wear sensible footwear and take food and drink.

But above all, slow down.

Stop beside the pools.

Watch the water.

Look carefully at the rocks and flowers.

Wonder at what time and nature have created.

Sant Miquel del Fai is one of the most beautiful places we have visited for the magazine so far.

And for those of us lucky enough to live here, it is another reminder of why Catalonia is such a wonderful place to call home.

If you haven't been able to find Gimby, our paranoid pig, try looking on page 25 again.

LANGUAGE LEARNING TIPS

“Let's Meet Up!”... If Only It Were That Simple

by Cristina de Muller & Nuria Coderch

Picture this. You've been living in Sant Cugat for a few months, your Spanish is coming along nicely, and you've just made a new friend at the school gate. You want to suggest a coffee. Easy, right?

“¿Quieres conocernos mañana?” © you say, smiling confidently, or perhaps even... “¿Quieres encontrarnos mañana?”. Your new friend blinks. A polite smile. Something got lost in translation - and it wasn't the coffee.

In English, “to meet” does everything. You meet someone for the first time, you meet a friend for lunch, you meet your neighbour in the lift. One verb, all occasions. Spanish and Catalan, however, draw a very clear line.

In Spanish, CONOCER is for that first encounter, and only the first. “*Encantado de conocerte*” - lovely to meet you. After that, this verb retires - or slips into the past: “*Mi marido y yo nos conocimos en París.*” You can only meet someone for the first time once.

For everything else - coffee, walks, cinema, catch-ups - the verb is QUEDAR. “¿Quieres quedar mañana? ¡Genial! ¿Cómo quedamos?” One of the most useful phrases in everyday Spanish. The answer writes itself: “*Quedamos en el bar de la plaza a las siete*” - or in Catalan: “*Quedem al bar de la plaça a les set!*”

One thing worth knowing: QUEDAR (to meet up) and QUEDARSE (to stay) are not the same verb. “¿Quieres quedar mañana?” - “No, gracias, estoy muy cansado, prefiero quedarme en casa... otro día quedamos, ¿vale?” Two completely different ideas, but with just one small written difference.

Now here's where Spanish surprises almost every English speaker. You already have plans? “*Mañana no puedo, ya he quedado.*” The plan hasn't happened yet, but the arrangement exists - so Spanish treats it as done. Present perfect for a future event. Odd at first, then oddly satisfying.

Catalan feels exactly the same: “*Demà no puc, ja he quedat.*”

Want to loop in a third friend? “*He quedado mañana con Jorge para ir al cine, ¿quieres venir?*” — “*¡Genial! ¿Cómo habéis quedado?*” — “*Hemos quedado a las siete en la plaza.*” In Catalan: “*Com heu quedat? Hem quedat demà a les set a la plaça.*”

One last gem: “¿Te va bien el sábado?” - is Saturday OK? “Me va genial” - or suggest another time: “me va mejor por la tarde.” Catalan is just as intuitive: “Et va bé dissabte? Em va millor a la tarda.”

This is exactly the kind of thing we love talking about - the bits of Spanish and Catalan that no textbook warns you about. One verb, two questions: ¿Cómo quedamos? when you're building a plan, ¿Cómo habéis quedado? when one already exists. We're an online academy based in Sant Cugat, and if any of this made you smile, you know where to find us.

¿Te apetece quedar? ¡Claro, quedamos mañana!

Cristina de Muller and Nuria Coderch are Co-founders and teachers at Spanish Fast & Fun, Sant Cugat's online academy for Spanish and Catalan.

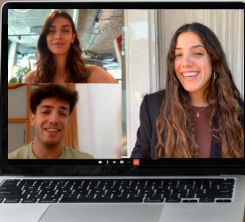

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