



## An Outstanding Olympic Monument

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When I was in Barcelona with my wife and a friend, I made a point to visit the Olympic Stadium in Montjuïc.

Barcelona is a vibrant city on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. It is the self-confident and progressive capital of Catalunya. With a thriving port and prosperous commercial centre, it is almost impossible to explore the city exhaustively, and even if you were on a lengthy visit, you will likely only scrape the surface.

It boasts some superb museums, including the world-class Museu d'Art de Catalunya, and individual art museums dedicated to Picasso, Joan Miró and Antoni Tàpies. It also has some outstanding Gothic and modernista (Art Nouveau) architecture, most perfectly and eccentrically expressed in the work of Antoni Gaudí.

Barcelona also hosted the 1992 Olympics. The main Olympic Stadium, a marvellously spacious arena, comfortably holds 65,000. It was built originally for the 1929 Exhibition. In 1936, this stadium was the main venue for the so-called 'People's Olympics' which was organised as an alternative to the Nazis' infamous Berlin Games of that year. However, the day before the official opening, Franco's army revolt triggered the Civil War and scuppered the Barcelona games. Some of the 25,000 athletes and spectators who had turned up stayed on to join the Republican forces.

For the 1992 Olympics, the stadium was completely refitted by Catalan architects to accommodate the opening and closing ceremonies. Remarkably, the only part untouched in the rebuilding process was the original Neoclassical façade – everything else was new.

It was about 19:00 hrs when we reached the Olympic Stadium. The sun was going down, casting long shadows of the Olympic monument (Torre de Calatrava) and columns of the Olympic Sports Complex, making it extremely interesting to photograph.

The Olympic Monument is a very outstanding structure. With the sun behind it, the striking silhouette appears to me to be a hand holding a javelin that

is pointed vertically towards heaven. Perhaps it signifies the Olympic spirit of always striving for the fastest, the highest, the furthest and the strongest. ■

