

## YOU ARE IN CATALONIA

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*No doubt you have noticed that Catalonia is a country with its own personality which, though immersed in the traditions of Latin and European civilisation, is clearly different from its neighbours both inside and outside the Iberian Peninsula. This difference is due to various causes: to our ancient Iberian roots and the profound mark made here by Greece and Rome, the fact that Catalonia once formed part of the Carolingian Empire and its expansion throughout the Mediterranean in medieval times, right down to the intense industrialisation of our country which, beginning in the 18th century, has generated a deeply-rooted tradition of work and modernity.*

*You will also notice that Catalonia has its own language. This language – Catalan – is Latin in origin, like the neighbouring Castilian, French or Provençal tongues, but it is clearly differentiated from them. The Catalan language was born between the 8th and 9th centuries, and documents written in it dating back to the 12th century have been preserved. During the Middle Ages, important legal documents were written in Catalan, and it was used by figures of universal renown as a literary language.*

*But Catalan is not only spoken in Catalonia, where over 95% of the six million Catalans know it, but also in the Balearic Islands, in Valencia, in Andorra, in the French province of Roussillon, and in the Italian city of Alghero. Overall, then, it is spoken in a territory that contains over ten million inhabitants. The Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies) as the academy of the language has scientific authority over it.*

*After a long period of persecution, Catalan has had the legal status of being the language of Catalonia and also its official language jointly with Castilian, or Spanish, since 1980. Catalan is thus now the language used in schools, by Catalan governmental bodies such as the Generalitat (Autonomous Government of Catalonia), local councils and other authorities, and by the institutional media. Finally, Catalan has regained its public presence in the cultural and economic life of our country; in the press, and in the media.*

*This volume is designed to help you with the meaning of some of the words you will read and hear most frequently in Catalan. We would like you to take it as a mark of hospitality and in the hope that it will facilitate your stay in Catalonia.*

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