

THE Salvador Dali

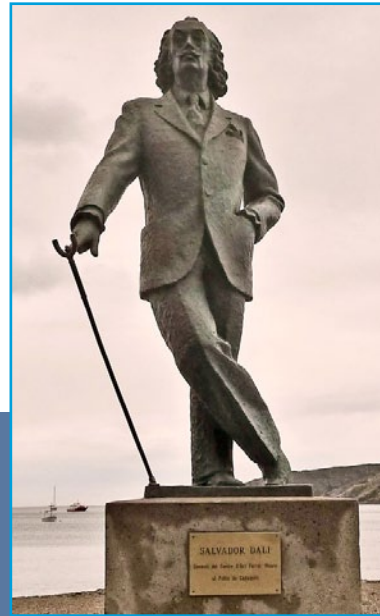
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Going to Dalí's House for the Holidays

Travel Notes with Photos by E. J. Campfield & Linda Bost

The holidays presented us with a travel opportunity -- but, where to go? I lived in Florida and Ohio years back, visited the Dali Museum in St. Petersburg of course and even the Morse collection displayed near Cleveland in the late 1970s. But despite 15 years now designing and producing art exhibits, books and publications for the Salvador Dali Gallery, I'd never seen *the heart of the Dali universe*.

My travel mate Linda has taken in art and culture galore in Italy, France, Germany, England -- her list goes on. She had a brilliant idea: "Let's go to Dali's house for the holidays."



Cadaques, Portlligat & Casa Salvador Dalí

After the long ride through winding hills we had heard so much about, we got off at the last stop. The bus terminal was deserted. Off season in Cadaques. We strolled into the empty little town, looking for Dalí's statue on the beach.

Next to it, we stopped for breakfast at Bar Boia, a favorite haunt of Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, and of course Dalí. The old people in town have living memory of him. Bar Boia's proprietor Manel Vehí offered us directions to Casa Dalí. Follow the coastline, the direction Dalí's statue hand is pointing. Then all the way up the hill. "You can't miss it," he assured us. "It has eggs on top."

The brochures say it's an easy 15-minute walk. Not so. Allow well over a half hour, or you'll be late for your tour (we were). It's steep and strenuous, not for the faint hearted. The hill street is Carrer de la Miranda. At the top, look for the little open-door church off to your right and then follow the signs to Casa Dalí. You'll recognize it easily when you get close. It has eggs on top.

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Dali's House ... (Cont'd from page 1)



Casa Salvador Dali at Portlligat is a conglomeration of little fishermen's cottages on the water that Dali annexed one at a time and converted into his grand but cozy homestead. Dali lived and worked there for some 50 years. Guided tours are scheduled for small groups only. There were four people on our tour.

The house is filled with sometimes amusing, sometimes somber glimpses into the personalities of the artist and Gala. He was unscathed by clutter and chaos; she liked things tidy and sparse. They slept in separate beds.

I laughed out loud at an endearing detail in their modest little bathroom. "What's funny?" our tour guide was curious. "The towels," I pointed out the logo-bearing towels by the sink. "They took the towels from the Hotel Meurice in Paris."

Gala died at Casa Dali in June 1982. A bereaved and despondent Dali quietly transported her in his Cadillac to Pubol Castle where he announced her death to the world. "He never returned to this house," our tour guide told us.

The Studio of Dali

For me, the high point of our visit was Dali's home studio. It gave context to his work habits and prodigious output. He designed easels -- one of them quite huge -- that permitted him to work while seated, lessening fatigue and extending his work hours. Two large, unfinished paintings on wood panels there emphasized his abandonment of Casa Dali following Gala's death. "They are the only original Dali paintings remaining on exhibit in the house," our tour guide said.

Hotel Duran in Figueres

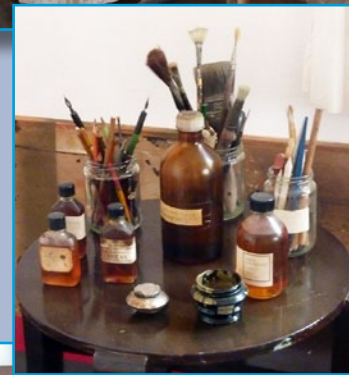
Dali was born in Figueres. In his later years, he completed his fantastic Theatre-Museum there -- a must-see for our trip. We left Figueres town center transportation terminals, assured our Hotel Duran was a leisurely walk through town. Along the way, a directional sign to the hotel pointed right. Our written notes said left. We followed the sign. Should have followed our notes. Someone should fix that sign.

The Hotel Duran is a treat. Dali was there often during the years working on his museum.

The public area walls of the hotel and adjoining restaurant are decorated with scores of Dali edition prints, photos and memorabilia of the artist. It's like a small Dali museum itself.

The Duran's restaurant is world class. Dali ate there frequently. Best of all, the Duran is just a short stroll from the Dali Theatre-Museum. "You can't miss it," the concierge assured us the next morning. "It has eggs on top."

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The Dalí Theatre-Museum

It really does have eggs on top -- lots of them. And it really is just a couple of minutes from the Hotel Duran.

How much time you budget to experience the most surreal place on earth is subjective. We heard from globe-trotting friends who spent autumn on the Costa Brava and coincidentally had been in Figueres at the Duran just two weeks before us. They devoted two full days to Dalí's museum.

We however managed it handily in a long afternoon, but it wore us out. It's a big place and just keeps going up and up. We lost track of how many levels.



Formerly the town's municipal theatre, gutted by fire during the Spanish Civil War, the structure lay derelict until acquired by Dalí and refashioned by him down to the tiniest detail. Inaugerated in September 1974, it stands now as the artist's last great work.


The collection on exhibit includes paintings, drawings, etchings and prints, sculptures, holograms, stereoscopes, photography and installation art. Many Dalí creations there are staggering in their sheer size. Some 1,500 items and artworks are on display.



Dalí's Cadillac



Dalí's magnum opus is capped by a magnificent reticular transparent geodesic dome. Far below the dome, Dalí lies entombed under his creation, beneath the floor in the basement.

Some have commented it is a little too close to the public toilets there, and the constant flushing sounds distract from the ambiance. But how surreal. How utterly and completely Dalí. 



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