

Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site

A former hospital,
full of light,
colours and nature

EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMME





Dear teachers,

You are at the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site, which was home to the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau (Hospital of Saint Paul and the Holy Cross) from 1916 to 2009.

This architectural complex, designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner, was built between 1905 and 1930, in different phases. It is UNESCO World Heritage and one of the most important Art Nouveau works of its time. It is a singular architectural and artistic creation, a compendium of Modernisme, the Catalan Art Nouveau, containing all the decorative arts applied to its architecture.

The starting point of the visit is the hypostyle hall (the hall of columns), situated beneath the main building. It was originally designed as a space for unloading hospital supplies and as an entrance for patients for whom the main door was inaccessible. In time, this space became the Accident and Emergency Service, one of the first to exist in the Catalan and Spanish health services. In front of you are the underground tunnels that interconnect all the Art Nouveau pavilions.



1. The tunnels

The tunnels, an absolute innovation at that time, connected all the pavilions and were the main communication route for all the hospital staff as well as patients who couldn't go out into the gardens.

Get your pupils to touch the walls in this space and say what they feel like. Then you can explain that the walls are clad with ceramics, a material that Domènech i Montaner used because it is easy to clean and disinfect.

The corners are also rounded for this purpose, offering a constructive system that prevented germs becoming ingrained in the corners. The use of curved lines is, however, a characteristic of the Art Nouveau.

Later on in the visit, you'll come back to the tunnels.



2. Sant Salvador Pavilion, ground floor

On the right as you enter the Sant Salvador pavilion (the first brought into operation at the Hospital, in 1916) you'll find the bust of the Marquis of Castellbell, one of the many patrons of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau. You can explain the figure of the patron and talk about this former hospital's principal patron, Pau Gil. He was a Catalan banker who lived in Paris and, in his will, left half of his fortune (some four million pesetas in 1891, which today would be about 30 million euros) for the construction of a hospital for the poor in Barcelona, to be dedicated to Saint Paul. This explains why the Site is full of his initials, the letters P and G. One of the characteristics of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau is that it was built almost entirely with the money of individual people, donations of varying sizes made by people in thanks for the work of the hospital and its professionals.

Stops along the exhibition itinerary

Video: Important for understanding where they are



Model of the Raval Hospital

Stop at this model. It represents the old Hospital de la Santa Creu, which existed before the one you're now visiting was built. It was inaugurated in 1401 and remained open until approximately 1920, when patients were slowly transferred to the new building, where you are now standing. It functioned for 500 years, until it became obsolete. Ask your pupils what they can see in the middle of the courtyard (the cross) and tell them they'll see it again very soon.



Model of the Art Nouveau hospital

Now you're looking at the model of the place where you are today. It is like a city within the city, or a garden city. All the pavilions are separate and set in gardens. The gardens were very important for Domènech i Montaner, as they formed part of his therapeutic plan. Before designing this complex of buildings, the architect travelled throughout Europe to inspect hospitals, and then drew up his project. The part shown in the model is what you can see when you go out into the gardens. There are 12 buildings, all World Heritage, and all of them except the one at the eastern extreme were designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner. This one was designed by his son, Pere Domènech i Roura, as were the three largest, situated in the northern part, corresponding to the old convent (centre), pharmacy (west) and kitchens (east).

On the screens beside the model you can see the original plans of Domènech i Montaner. The architect's original project envisaged the construction of 48 buildings, of which just 27 were finally constructed. Domènech i Montaner built just twelve of them. The ones built by his son, though based on the father's constructive principle, cannot be called Art Nouveau. They are more sober and rational, with less ornamentation and fewer decorative elements.

In the display cases in this space, you can see elements that explain part of the history of this institution.

Take the stairs at the back up to the next floor.



3. Sant Salvador Pavilion, first floor

The figure you see represents a dragon, a recurrent symbol in all cultures and much used in Art Nouveau architecture. This contemporary version is a tribute to Lluís Domènech i Montaner. Point out to your students that the images they can see on the dragon's scales are fragments of other buildings also designed by him.

On the screens situated at the bottom of the dragon you can see other buildings and projects by Domènech i Montaner, including the Palau de la Música, a World Heritage site like this one.

Before going outside, take a look at the ceiling, eight metres above you, and the walls. They are decorated with flowers and leaves, because nature was a source of inspiration and an ornamental resource much used in Art Nouveau architecture. You can also tell your pupils how important it was for a sick person lying in bed all day to be able to open their eyes and see nature above them. The colours used in both the ceiling and the walls are soft and relaxing.

The room you'll see on the left, with its large windows, was the day room of the patients' wards. You'll see another one later on. In this one you can see the casts of sculptures of angels (the protectors of patients) by two of the principal sculptors who worked with Domènech i Montaner on this project: Eusebi Arnau and Pau Gargallo.



4. Gardens

The gardens of the former hospital were designed as a place where patients could take refuge in tranquillity and nature. They made the hospital a healthier place to be, and cleaned the air. There were winter gardens, with trees that let in the sunlight, and summer gardens, with trees and plants to offer shade and protection from the heat. The architect laid out the gardens with native species of water-resistant trees and plants that stand up to changes in temperature.

Today, with some small alterations, the gardens still follow the architect's layout. There is a high level of biodiversity, with as many as 60 varieties of trees, some from the initial period, and aromatic plants. There are also 50 species of birds that live here or pass through on their migratory routes.

Ask your pupils if they recognise any of the trees, like the orange trees. Depending on the time of year, you'll find them in blossom, giving off their lovely scent, or see little oranges or loaded trees. Get them to count the trees, too: in total there are 14 orange trees; they are bitter oranges, a more resistant, aromatic variety.

You'll also see lavender and rosemary, and smell their perfume. Remind them it's a good idea not to touch the plants to avoid damaging them.

In the gardens you'll see a replica of the cross that can be found in the Raval building, the old Hospital de la Santa Creu, the same cross you saw in the model.



5. The old operating theatre

This space is in the shape of a semicircle; it's called an amphitheatre and was the hospital's main operating theatre. Get your pupils to stand behind the railing. You can explain that this is where the medicine students and other doctors stood to watch the surgeons operating and learn from them.

This room is very light because back then, at the start of the 20th century, the electricity could often go out, and doctors couldn't be left in the dark in the middle of an operation! There was always daylight here. The glazed outside was clad with alabaster, a kind of translucent marble that let light in but meant that nothing could be seen from outside.



6. The exterior of Sant Rafael Pavilion

In the Sant Rafael Pavilion you'll see a historic recreation of what a patients' ward was like a hundred years ago, when the hospital was opened. But before you go in, get your pupils to look at the statues above the doorway and see if they identify the animals.

These gargoyles, repeated in each of the pavilions, are an example of the symbolism present throughout the Site. The animals symbolise life (animals with their young) and death or illness (monsters). This dichotomy is visible in all the building exteriors.



7. Interior del Pabellón de Sant Rafael

Inside you'll find an explanation of what the city of Barcelona, this pavilion and the medicine practised in the twenties were like, when this building was opened. At the back there's an example of how the patients were distributed. All the pavilions had an altar. This hospital was run by nuns and monks, and owned by the City Council and the Church.

In the central hall there were 28 patients; in fact, all the wards were designed to hold the same number of patients. With the passing years, as the population of Barcelona grew and medicine advanced, the pavilions gradually adapted to the new needs. More room was needed, so all the available space was used, adding extra floors or new buildings beside the pavilions. Over time, Domènech i Montaner's original work lost its definition. The rehabilitation process involved recovering the volumes, spaces and decoration envisaged by the architect.

The pavilions are named after saints, in memory of members of the family of Pau Gil or other patrons. The ones dedicated to male saints (west wing) were initially intended for male patients, and those dedicated to virgins or female saints (east wing) for women patients. This distribution was never applied. The first patients to come to the hospital, from Santa Creu, were women and they occupied the Sant Salvador Pavilion, the one you just saw.

Remember that this was a hospital for the poor. At that time, wealthy families did not usually go to hospitals. The doctors went to their homes to attend them. The pavilions did, however, set aside some rooms, in the volume behind the ward, for patients with more economic possibilities.



8. The outside of La Mercè Pavilion

The pavilion opposite Sant Rafael is called La Mercè. Although it has been rehabilitated, it is not open to visitors because, like some other pavilions, it houses the offices of international organisations working in the fields of health, education, sustainability and innovation. In this case, it houses the Barcelona office of the WHO.

When the hospital was still operating, the Mercè Pavilion was the maternity ward. Many of the babies of Barcelona and its surrounding areas were born here.



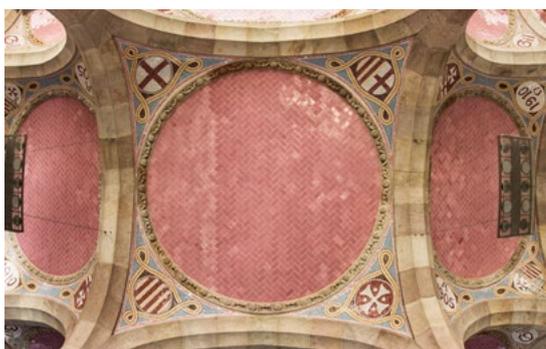
9. The tunnels at the north entrance

The visit continues through the tunnels, accessed by steps in the middle of the garden, between Sant Rafael and La Mercè.



10. La Puríssima Pavilion

This ward is presented to show the effort going into rehabilitation. From the first completely rehabilitated pavilion (Sant Salvador), you went on to Sant Rafael which has not yet been restored, though after the removal of added elements it is in a relatively good state of repair. Then, in La Puríssima, where only the added floors have been removed, you can still see the scars. Its walls are bare, the ceiling has to be protected to prevent the tiles decorated with green and white leaves from falling, and, in the side walls, you can see the beams of the added floor slab.



11. The Administration Pavilion

You are now in the foyer of the Administration Pavilion. This building has never housed patients. It contained the hospital's administrative services, the library, the archive, a staff residence, the school of medicine, and, most noteworthy, the main entrance to the hospital. The pink ceiling includes symbols in each of the four corners above the vaults. They contain different decorative elements: the coats of arms of Barcelona, Catalonia, the Holy Cross and Saint Paul, Pau Gil, Paris, and the bank he directed. The flowers decorating the capitals of the columns are practically all medicinal. This is the most ornamented building on the Site. One of the defining characteristics of Art Nouveau is the extremely important role of decoration. As well as the foyer, you can also visit one of the two profusely decorated galleries, and enter one of the side halls. The ceilings of these halls are eleven metres high. The one in the east wing, Pau Gil Hall, contained the archive, and Cambó Hall, in the west wing, contained the library.



12. Domènech i Montaner Hall

This imposing space is called Domènech i Montaner Hall and used to be the hospital's assembly hall. It is 18 metres high and beautifully decorated throughout. A variety of construction materials are present: wood, mosaic, wrought iron, stained glass, marble... The sculptures in the frieze around the door (Sant Jordi, or Saint George) and the parament above the mosaic (coat of arms of the merged hospitals) are by Pau Gargallo. The painting is by Aleix Clapers and represents the relocation of the remains of Saint Eulalia from Santa Maria del Mar to the Cathedral. It was painted in 1920. A border with Gothic lettering runs around the hall. It is a kind of prayer, and you can read it directly or from the panel in the entrance to the hall.

Thank you for your visit.

Why not encourage your pupils to write or draw their own story about Sant Pau and email it to us at comunicacio.recinte@santpau.cat

There may be changes to this itinerary due to the use being made of the various spaces.