SUMMERING CLOSE TO HOME 1850-1950

«Summering necessarily implies a residence, that is, a habitat, a place, a scene, a landscape.»
Marc Boyer, 2007

«[Summer visitors] in general all rich bourgeois, used to the good life and, consequently, well able to afford the trappings of summering: travel, maintaining a second home and servants...»
Glòria Soler, 1995

English

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THE VARIOUS TYPES OF SUMMER VISITOR

"[The summer colony] consists of two elements: the 'we've known each other forever' and the 'newcomers'. It must be said that seven or eight years, not even consecutive, sufficed to enter the forever class."
Eugeni d'Ors, *La ben plantada*, 1911

There wasn't only one type of summering. For some, it meant going back to the family farm or home town. For others, it was a village by the sea or in the mountains, which could be (or not) a different one every year, practising a degree of nomadism. There was a tendency, however, to be loyal to one particular place and landscape. They were all types of "classic summering", which lasted two or three months and was a practice among the wealthy classes.

BACK TO THE FARM

"Everyone who's Barcelonan by adoption has a love, a weakness even, for their county. For their farm or villa they commit acts of poor management they would never do in town; that generous, almost sinful friendship is always better than the frivolity of those nomadic summer colonies in search of fashion."
Jaume Bofill, 1931



GEOGRAPHY AND TRANSPORT

"This train journey is one of the most delightful. Almost the entire way, with barely an interruption, is along the sea shore, and there's nothing more beautiful or poetic than those ever-rolling waves that break at the foot of the locomotives."
Víctor Balaguer, 1857

The largest number of summer colonials gathered around fifty kilometres from Barcelona, either by the sea or in the mountains. Going away for the summer involved complex transport logistics. The extension of the railways favoured certain resorts, particularly in the last quarter of the 19th century. The train was first supplemented by covered traps, stagecoaches and horse-drawn omnibuses, and later by buses, taxis and cars.

LOOK AFTER YOUR HEALTH: TAKING THE WATERS AND SEA BATHING

"Gradually, with the turn of the century, saltwater baths went out of fashion as a cure as other therapies were developed for certain illnesses. Sun and sea bathing, very much in line with new medical ideas and social changes (tanning, exercising, swimming, body liberation, nudism), would soon supplant the early practices of bathing in a basin."
Mercè Tatjer, 2018

"Considering how important the town [Cardedeu] has become as a summer resort, it is necessary to appoint an advertising committee to take care of such problems... And to let first-time visitors know the advantages the town offers over others to spend the summer: beautiful scenery, dry climate, festivals, slightly laxative and, above all, diuretic water."
Diary of Tomàs Balbey, pharmacist, 1895

Natural hygiene made public the environmental health values derived from fresh air, a dry climate, woodlands, thermal and medicinal waters, physical exercise, sea bathing and a good diet. Going away for the summer was synonymous with looking after one's health. The presence of a spa in a town was an important factor in consolidating a colony of summer visitors in its environs. Spa towns soon became notable places of cultural sociability promoting leisure and sport in their salons and gardens.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SUMMER VISITORS

"The favourite haunt of the summer colony [in Cerdanyola] is the Gran Casino, established a third of a century ago and trying to excel itself with every year that passes, its management sparing no effort so that, on any occasion, its members find within its walls, in its rooms and gardens, the haven, gathering or solace and recreation that is most to their taste."
Manuel Francitorra, 1951)

Every summer resort worth its salt had a casino, a privileged social space for summer visitors. There they would meet, play bridge and dominoes, hold gatherings, balls, musical soirées and put on plays... Many marriage proposals were accepted in their salons and gardens.

SUMMERING INTELLECTUALS AND ARTISTS

"When Rusiñol and his crew discovered it, Sitges was a quiet little unknown fishing village... But apparently Sitges holds a special charm for artists [...] it has been severely punished by literature. Pretty much everyone, at one time or another has dared to write something about "blanca Subur", its 'immaculate whiteness'..."
Josep M. Planes, 1929

There were a good many intellectuals, artists and writers among the summer visitors. Proof of this are paintings, drawings, poems and novels; a rich and varied production that helped create a standard view of certain places. Since then, when you look at it, whenever we see certain landscapes, aren't we doing it largely through the prism of those first summering artists?



HERITAGE FOOTPRINTS. TOWN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE

"The golden dream of every dealer and shopkeeper is to own a villa. As the business grows, they feel more keenly the need to withdraw far from the bustling city, to the flowering calm of the suburbs. Some want even more. Some dream of a house out in the country [...]. Meadows and woodland; farmers and shepherds."
Carles Soldevila, 1960

Many are the heritage footprints left behind by summering: huge spas and hotels; houses that adapted to the various architectural styles in vogue, some we might call eclectic, modernista, *Noucentista* and rationalist; boulevards and gardens with plenty of shade. The social changes that came with mass tourism and the advances in drug therapies brought about the decline of the great houses and spas (revalued today). A fragile heritage that must be conserved and refurbished, and put to new uses.

FROM THE WORKING CLASS AND ARTISAN SUMMER TO MASS TOURISM

"The Republic will ensure every worker conditions necessary for a dignified existence. Social legislation shall regulate: health insurance [...] paid annual holidays [...]"
art. 46 of the Constitution of the Republic of Spain 1931

Summering started to become socially diversified in the 1920s and '30s. The institutionalisation of a week's paid holiday provided for in the 1931 Constitution helped to bring this about. From then on, workers and employees began another type of summer break that was shorter and more frugal. This laid the foundations for the future mass tourism and summer holidays, which would not come about until the mid-sixties.