

PERIOD	YEAR	
Romanesque	900	
	1000	11th-12th CENTURY
	1100	Feudalism became firmly established and the expansion of agriculture led to a better distribution of "masos" (farmhouse + land), becoming self-sufficient farms inhabited mainly by tenant farmers under a feudal lord.
	1200	13th CENTURY
Gothic		Growth in the population led to increased crop production and the appearance of new farmhouses on the plain. In terms of construction, the Gothic style began, with larger spaces, technical improvements such as the use of lime and roof tiles, and the expansion to two sections in the building.
	1300	14th CENTURY
Renaissance		The Black Death in the middle of the century reduced the population by more than half and many farms were abandoned or regrouped into larger holdings. Architecturally, an upper floor started to appear.
	1400	15th-16th CENTURY
		Once the crisis of the Black Death and the subsequent Catalan civil war had been overcome, and with the "Arbitral Decision" of 1486 and the consequent abolition of feudalism, the recovery of abandoned farmhouses began, particularly benefitting wealthier farmers. Architecturally, the evolutionary process in what is known as the "classic masia" came to an end.
	1500	
Baroque		Major social, economic and demographic changes took place, influenced by conflicts such as the Reapers' War (1640-1652) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). Vine cultivation expanded enormously due to the growing demand for wine and spirits for export, and improvements to irrigation (via the "Rec Comtal" channel) boosted irrigated crops and encouraged the emergence of "Indian meadows", large open fields used to dry dyed fabrics.
	1700	
Neoclassical	1600	17th-18th CENTURY
		Major social, economic and demographic changes took place, influenced by conflicts such as the Reapers' War (1640-1652) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). Vine cultivation expanded enormously due to the growing demand for wine and spirits for export, and improvements to irrigation (via the "Rec Comtal" channel) boosted irrigated crops and encouraged the emergence of "Indian meadows", large open fields used to dry dyed fabrics.
Catalan Modernism	1800	19th CENTURY
		Agriculture reached its peak during the first half of the century, partly thanks to the "Rec Comtal" irrigation channel becoming publicly managed, the city of Barcelona remaining walled, and nearby towns such as Gràcia, Sants and Sant Andreu growing exponentially. During the second half, the Industrial Revolution accelerated and a lot of farming land was expropriated to build factories and infrastructure, whilst the Eixample district designed by Cerdà (1859) began its development. Many farmhouses were converted into neoclassical summer homes and completely lost their traditional appearance.
Avantguardes	1900	20th CENTURY
		The rapid expansion of the Eixample district drastically reduced the number of working farmhouses. Many were abandoned, others transformed into public facilities or restaurants whilst some continued as dwellings, but they were completely absorbed into the urban fabric. The extensive renovations carried out to adapt them to their new function were generally accompanied by an aesthetic change in the façade, in line with Catalan Modernism. Nearly all agricultural land had been lost by the end of the century.
	2000	

THE BARCELONA "STEP", COASTLINE AND "REC COMTAL" IRRIGATION CHANNEL

It is believed that, around 10-15,000 years ago, a geological fault appeared with a vertical drop of between 4 and 10 metres and around 10 kilometres in length, dividing the current area of Barcelona into two plains: the upper and lower. This geological feature, known as the Barcelona "Step", starts at La Trinitat and follows a north-south direction, placing Sant Andreu, La Sagrera, El Clot and Eixample in the upper part and El Bon Pastor, La Verneda, Sant Martí and Poblenou in the lower part. It then crosses Les Glòries and passes through the Arc de Triomf, Carrer Trafalgar, Plaça Urquinaona and Carrer Pelai, ending at Plaça Universitat.

It is important to note, however, that Barcelona's coastline has advanced over the centuries due to sediment deposits from the Besòs River and the construction of dykes, moving from being right next to the "Step" in Roman times to its current position. Consequently, while the lower part of the "Step" has become consolidated much more recently due to the deposit of sedimentary soils and has been an area of wetlands, sandbanks and beaches, the topography of the upper part, elevated above sea level and made up of clay, gravel and pebbles, has remained the same for millennia.

Although neither was ideal for agriculture, the climate and topography offered favourable conditions for human settlement, even more so thanks to the "Rec Comtal" irrigation channel, first documented in 1075. Starting from Montcada i Reixac, the channel followed the upper edge of the "Step", taking advantage of much of the route of the ancient Roman aqueduct, until reaching the area of Arc de Triomf. Initially, the water was used to power royal flour mills but, in the 18th century, the channel was improved to irrigate the lowlands of the municipalities of Sant Andreu and Sant Martí, thereby promoting agricultural development and the establishment of farmhouses.

As a result, the Barcelona "Step" and the "Rec Comtal" irrigation channel became an important boundary between different agricultural areas: the lower plain was used for irrigated crops while the upper plain was mainly dedicated to vineyards, until the phylloxera crisis in the 19th century.

However, everything began to change from the mid-19th century onwards. In 1854, the construction of the Barcelona-Granollers railway line, located on the edge of the lowlands, added another physical barrier. Shortly afterwards, the development of the Eixample district in the upper part left the lowlands for industrial uses, albeit often combined with remnants of agricultural activity.

ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGY OF THE CLASSIC (CATALAN) FARMHOUSE

[Architectural typology is the classification of buildings based on their function, form or spatial configuration].

The term "masia" includes not only genuine farmhouses per se but also a whole range of buildings which, in some remote historical period, had been the homes of farmers but, due to historical transformations, had changed their function entirely. The original typology is still easily recognisable in some of Barcelona's farmhouses but the vast majority have undergone such significant renovations, extensions and/or alterations over the centuries that it is difficult to appreciate the original building.

The traditional "masia" is a building with a rectangular floor plan and four façades. In general, the main façade faces south and contains the main entrance. The most distinguishing feature of a "masia" is its roof, as this reveals the structure and location of the load-bearing walls. Most have a gabled roof and the orientation of the slopes or pitch results in two distinct types: one with the ridge of the roof parallel to the main façade (side-gabled) and the other with the ridge of the roof perpendicular to it (front-gabled). There is another, less common type: the hipped roof. Finally, there are a number of buildings that don't fit into any of these types because they originate from old tower-type farmhouses.

FARMHOUSES WITH SIDE-GABLED ROOFS (RIDGE PARALLEL TO THE MAIN FAÇADE)

These account for 18% of classic Catalan farmhouses. They tend to be the oldest or simplest farmhouses. Initially, they had a ground floor and an upper floor but, over the centuries, additional floors were often added. They were generally located along the side of a track and positioned parallel to it, rather than facing south. This type was more commonly seen in locations with little rainfall and the fact that rainwater drained towards the front and rear façades meant that extensions and other farmhouses could be added, one next to the other, creating the first "streets" or small hamlets for extra security.

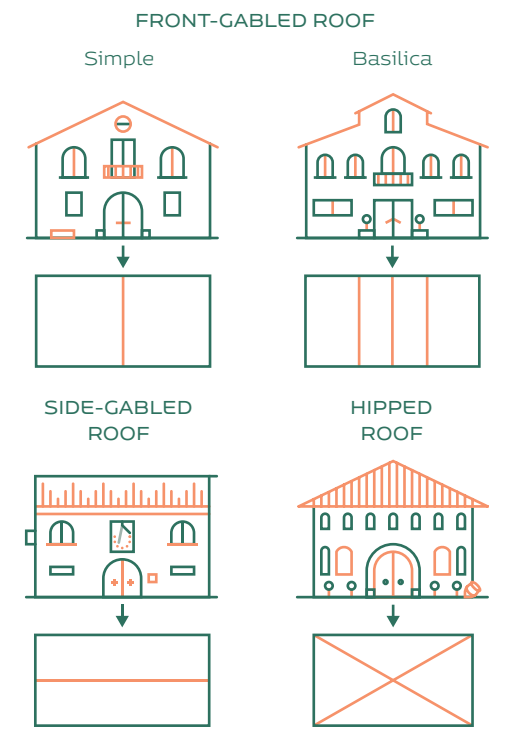
The elongated exterior space allows for several entrances and the main door and other openings are usually arranged asymmetrically.

FARMHOUSES WITH FRONT-GABLED ROOFS (RIDGE PERPENDICULAR TO THE MAIN FAÇADE)

These account for 70% of farmhouses with a classic structure. Most of these buildings were constructed during periods of economic prosperity (16th-19th century). There are two easily recognisable variants within this type: the first is a simpler building with a gabled roof covering the entire building, while the other is the so-called "basilica" farmhouse, with a central three-storey section and two side sections with two floors. In both cases, rainwater drains down the side façades. These farmhouses were located anywhere on the land, with open outdoor spaces and no particular feature other than the south-facing orientation of the main façade. The front door and a large window for the first-floor hall, which serves as a distribution point for the bedrooms, are located in the centre of the façade. The rest of the openings are arranged symmetrically. These farmhouses tended to be built in a single phase, so the owner needed to have sufficient financial resources.

HIPPED ROOF

These account for 12% of farmhouses with a classic structure. Their origin lies in the old manor house, where the building consisted of four parts surrounding a central courtyard. In the vast majority of cases, the courtyard has been removed and only the staircase lantern remains. Generally, they have a very pronounced horizontal cornice or eaves on all four façades. These are usually the later and larger farmhouses or manor houses.



SUNDIALS IN FARMHOUSES

There are more than 7,400 registered and catalogued sundials in Catalonia, one of the largest inventories in Europe, with some examples dating back to Greco-Roman times.

In rural areas, sundials helped farmers to schedule their work in the fields and their daily lives. They are therefore placed on the main façades of farmhouses, usually facing south to make the most of the path taken by the sun and to provide the community with a means of measuring time.

The first sundials documented on farmhouses in Catalonia date back to the Middle Ages but they became particularly popular in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was at this time that the profession of "quadranteer" or sundial maker emerged, and many of their creations were regarded as authentic works of art. In this way, in addition to their practical function, the addition of a sundial became a source of prestige and social distinction in rural areas. With this impetus, from the 18th century onwards they became even more popular, acquiring a decorative and symbolic function.

Many sundials were integrated within the architectural aesthetics of farmhouses and, in addition to various decorative elements, also contained phrases that often reflected humanity's relationship and harmony with nature, especially the sun and the sky.

The sun shines for everyone.

A ray of sunshine gives me life.

When there's no sun, I say nothing; but when it touches me, with the shadow of my gnomon, I tell everyone the time.

My time is for all.

I'm a sundial, to serve anyone.

Today, tomorrow and the day after, you'll never see me still.

Note carefully the time: you'll never see it again.

When the sun has gone, my work is done.

«The (sun)dial, emblem of the Catalan's knowledge of the value of time, is now placed on most of the stuccoed and painted houses. This primitive clock, which is rather for the benefit of the passenger outside than for the tenant inside, is peculiar to this city of Barca»

RICHARD FORD.
Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home. 1845.

FARMHOUSES OF BARCELONA

- "Rec Comtal" irrigation channel
- Barcelona "Step"
- Coastline until 1450
- Coastline until 1450
- Streams
- Other farmhouses

