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## Barcelona offers buyers best of both worlds

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The vibrantly Catalan Barcelona, where property prices fell almost 40 per cent after the global downturn, has, like Palma, gone from being a bit of a shabby Mediterranean city to one that now attracts people from all over the world for its shopping, schooling and fashionable restaurants. Barcelona's transformation, kick-started by the 1992 Olympics and assisted by its football club that is now a global brand in its own right, has been more dramatic than most.

The part of Barcelona that offers the truly urban beach lifestyle is the modernist Diagonal Mar — named for its proximity to the sea and Diagonal Avenue — an attractive residential area with a shopping centre, parks, and tram and metro links.

*"This is the only area of the city where you can get modern apartments with amenities — and being ten minutes from the centre appeals to buyers,"* says Alex Vaughan of the Lucas Fox estate agency. *"It's an exciting area with a frustrating lack of new projects, although a major development by an American company is expected to launch soon."* He says that of the four existing "Illa" glass towers of high-end apartments, the first-built, Illa del Llac is the most popular, along with the last, Illa del Mar for its striking modernity. Lucas Fox is selling a two-bedroom duplex penthouse there for €2.19 million or a four-bedroom apartment in Illa del Llac for €770,000.