

## **BARCELONA: THE VIEW FROM THE STREETS – script v3**

### **BOB INTRO:**

Today on the programme – “Barcelona: The View From The Streets”.

It’s renowned for its historic architecture, boutique shopping, its beaches and great weather. No surprise, then, that Barcelona attracts millions of tourists each year.

But this European city was hit hard by the global financial crisis. Its homeless problem has rocketed – with thousands now sleeping rough on the streets, every night.

Today, we’re going to hear from a man who knows all about that situation, who now makes it his business to show the world what’s really going on in Barcelona – as one of the city’s ALTERNATIVE tour guides.

Exclusively for ‘Unfictional’, the radio producer Steve Urquhart joins a journey that steers away from the familiar tourist trail... through side streets and back alleys, towards soup kitchens and hostels... into the “less comfortable” parts of town you won’t read about in any guide book.

And as well as uncovering some of the city’s hidden truths, Steve learns that there’s much more to the guides themselves than meets the eye.

From KCRW.com, it’s ‘Unfictional’ – and “Barcelona: The View From The Streets”.

### **0’00” INTRO**

RAMON: When you are on the streets, you are judged, mistreated – and people, they don’t know your background. And even myself, I never think that’s going to happen that way. But – maybe we can do something about it.

*Intro music – fades*

## **0'40" SCENE SET – MORNING**

(FX – bells)

**Barcelona. It's Sunday morning, 8 o'clock.**

**Most people are still asleep, in bed. But many are sleeping on the streets.**

**They're sheltering on church steps, benches... in doorways, sleeping bags, cardboard boxes... usually, surrounded by blankets, old paper cups, and pigeons.**

(FX – birds / van arrives)

**As the sun rises, police vans arrive to "move them along"...**

(FX – van door, drives off)

**...and the problem is "hidden away". Well... almost.**

## **1'40" RAMON TOUR**

Hello – I'm Ramon – I'm gonna be your private guide...

**About an hour later, a man stands next to the cathedral steps, smiling, and holding up a sign. It says HIDDEN CITY TOURS. The man's name is Ramon.**

How long you been in Barcelona, some of you know Barcelona well?

**I'm just tagging along with today's tour. It's for a group of 14 young people from Iceland.**

OK. We are in the heart of Barcelona...

**None of us has ever met Ramon... but it's like a reunion with an old friend, or maybe a favourite uncle. He's so warm, so welcoming...**

I will give you some advices of things you might like to visit...

**And he seems nothing like the official tour guides across the street, with their uniforms and clipboards. Ramon is informal, but smart – elegantly dressed in a stylish jacket and hat. He could pass for a movie star.**

(FX – guitar)

Oh, we have a nice music for us!

**Although we start off outside the cathedral, it isn't long before Ramon lights up a cigarette...**

Let's go.

**...and leads us away from the other tourists.**

*MUSIC: Jamie Woon – Shoulda (instrumental)*

OK guys and ladies, ladies and guys, OK. We are in Saint Felip Neri Square... this place is one of favourite places for homeless people to sleep at night-time, because it's quiet, there's no traffic. And if it rains you can go under the arch and be covered, ok? That doesn't mean the police doesn't come in the morning and kick you – it does, they do.

**He tells us with great authority about shelters, social housing... and soup kitchens.**

I have a lot of respect for this place, for different reasons. People can go in, no question asked – we don't care what nationality, social situation, nothing... you go eat...

**Ramon's eyes are everywhere – he's constantly watching us, asking us questions, reading our expressions, seeing which bits capture our imaginations... he makes this a very personal tour.**

On this case it's a beautiful group. I like it, I like when people are interested, because I can give what I want to give. Not just the typical tourist marketing, no, we don't go for that.

**He's also keeping an eye out for any potential trouble.**

OK – one thing I have to say, to people from other countries – it happens in any big city, we have pickpockets in Barcelona. Pickpockets, we have them. Also, when you go to the cafes, and the cafeterias, you be careful. Someone can put a newspaper in front of your eyes, before you know your mobile phone is gone, or your wallet is gone. So it's important that, be careful.

(FX bells, walking)

**Along the way, we meet street drinkers.**

(FX crazy guy)

**Sex workers.**

**Drug dealers.**

(FX dogs barking)

**Ramon knows his clients want the tour to feel “edgy”. That’s what we’ve signed up for.**

**5’12” VOXES**

MAN: It tells the real stories. Because it’s very easy to take the tourist guides, to walk around in hundreds of tourists – and well, it’s nice to see those places – but the REAL story is the one behind everything. And get the good insights.

STEVE: What do you think of Ramon as a guide?

WOMAN 1: I think he’s fantastic. I think you get a pretty different perspective of things.

WOMAN 2: The other tours, I think you can just pick up a brochure and walk by yourself... he takes you on some streets you would never think of going by yourself.

*(music stops)*

**5’55” END OF TOUR**

RAMON: OK ladies and guys – that’s where we’re gonna finish our tour. OK? I was very pleased to meet you, I hope you enjoyed and you have something to take back home – not from Ramon but from the tour! – anyway it was a pleasure to meet you (APPLAUSE)... thank you, thank you...

**The morning’s flown by. We’ve learned a lot about Barcelona. And I’m about to learn a lot more about Ramon himself.**

STEVE: Thank you so much! Enjoyed it?

RAMON: Yes, yes.

STEVE: So where am I gonna take you for lunch?

RAMON: You wanna go to a very inexpensive place, like where regular people go and stuff?

(FX – enter restaurant, footsteps upstairs, music, kitchen sounds, chairs)

RAMON: It’s just the place you get chicken... you see?

STEVE: Perfect!

**After some wonderful pasta with chicken, Ramon and I go for a walk, to one his favourite parts of Barcelona, just by the Raval.**

(FX guitar, footsteps)

RAMON: Well you can hear the guitar, see those beautiful orange trees, fountains, the little birds go to drink there, and you can smell and feel the peace. And we're just two blocks away from the crowd! People sleep on the streets, they take a little nap under those arches over there. Nobody bother them. There's a beautiful café over here. I think it's perfect, it's perfect. (+ MUSIC)

FX FOUNTAIN / WALKING / DISTANT GUITAR

**It's only after a few minutes, that you begin to notice just how many people are sleeping rough here.**

RAMON: They can't sleep at night-time... because police pass by... so they have to sleep in the daytime, a few hours, and that's one of the places.

STEVE: Is it safer to sleep during the day, would you say?

RAMON: Over here, yes. Because people protect you. They have... if someone wanna hurt somebody, they say no, you can't do that.

MUSIC: Nobukasu Takemura – Sun Trap In The Sea

**Ramon knows what he's talking about. It's not long since he was sleeping on the streets. He tells me his story.**

### 8'27" RAMON'S STORY

RAMON: My name is Ramon... First, I am a human being! (laughs)... I born in Castilla, Salamanca – 200km from Madrid, I was born there, then I lived in different cities, because each time my father had promotion for his job, we changed.

**Ramon spent his childhood moving with his family around Europe, and North Africa, and then to Costa Rica – where he got a job in a nightclub.**

RAMON: I was 21. I was managing a discotheque. I was in the music, and I love it! Because I was, like a young guy with the girls, going out. And it's a beautiful country – land of Americas – wonderful country. Beautiful nature too.

**But this young guy soon got bored with Costa Rica's beautiful nature. Leaving his family there, Ramon worked his way up through Central America. He was looking for adventure, and excitement... and he found it in the United States.**

In New York everything changed. I mean, there I was coming from San Salvador, took the plane, (how old were you?) 26. So I hit Washington, then to New York. I remember it was night time, when you see all the buildings light up in New York it

was fascinating, yeah?! My first American ice cream in New Jersey. And then it was sunny days – and so cold when I went outside!

### **10'07" NYC RESTAURANT**

**He loved New York City. He worked in a restaurant, first as a Bus Boy... until the day he fell out with one of his colleagues.**

RAMON: He was a guy who was bothering me a lot, and one day, I punch him against the coats. And Robert, the owner, he loves me, he likes me very much – he said “Ramon, you wanna try the kitchen?”

STEVE: So he didn't punish you, his solution was to put you in the kitchen...

RAMON: Yes!

STEVE: Did he wanna just get you out of the front of house?

RAMON: No, he appreciated me very much, I was a hard worker...

~~STEVE: He must have thought a lot of you...~~

~~RAMON: Yeah, he was a nice person, yeah!~~

STEVE: He must have seen a talent in you I suppose?

RAMON: Yeah probably...

STEVE: You were good with your hands!

(LAUGHTER)

RAMON: I don't know! But I become good with the knives! In the kitchen, I'm talking about!

*MUSIC: Chic – Everybody Dance*

**Ramon's career took off. He worked his way up, and became Head Chef at some exclusive restaurants. He catered for Johnny Carson, Jack Nicholson, Omar Sharif, Dustin Hoffman. But he didn't just work hard: he also played hard.**

*(music up)*

**This was the New York of the late 70s, and the early 80s. Ramon was going out to clubs – Studio 54 was his favourite.**

**He developed a late-night, after-work addiction to dancing... and to cocaine. That didn't go down well at home, where he had a wife and a baby boy.**

RAMON: I was very much a going out person... Veronica was very jealous, she thought I was going with all the girls – it wasn't true... but I was work in restaurants. And in the life of people who work in restaurants, it's very hard to keep a marriage.

**As he moved into his 40s, Ramón struggled with his responsibilities towards Veronica and Raymond Anthony. He lost them both.**

RAMON: I love my son very much... (How old was he at the time, then?) He was very young, he was one year old when we separate.

## 12'22" TWIN TOWERS

**If he was ever going to regain access to his son, Ramon would need to get off the drugs – and so he tried. He made a clean break in Miami, and started to get his life back on track. He returned to New York, where things were going well... until September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.**

*(FX world trade center)*

**That morning, Ramon was working close to the World Trade Center. Just before 9am, he stepped out of his kitchen.**

RAMON: When the Twin Towers went down ... I was on a break, and I saw people looking at the towers, and the smoke and the helicopter picking up people, and I saw the tower coming down before my eyes ... To see the New Yorkers, and the people looking for their families, the ashes all over the city, to see the panic in the face of people, and so... I mean, I was dreaming of that many times.

*(FX world trade center)*

RAMON: Even now, when it comes every year, and they start to put it on TV, I have to turn it off. Cos it's like you come back to live that stuff again.

STEVE: I guess when you saw it with your own eyes, people falling from the towers, and the second plane hit the tower...

RAMON: Yes yes yes...

STEVE: ...it must just mess with your head.

RAMON: You're right – it did. I didn't know exactly to what extent... I realised later. I relapsed, and things happened one after another.

**The relapse led Ramón to some dark places. Within a couple of years, he decided he couldn't stay in New York – so, after more than three decades there, he returned to Spain.**

**In March 2004, he prepared to board his flight to the Spanish capital. But as he waited, he was stunned by the news unfolding on the TV screens at JFK airport: terrorist attacks on Madrid's trains.**

RAMON: It was two years after the Towers. And it was when I was in the airport, I saw the monitor, and I saw the President of Spain – and I dunno, when I got in Madrid, there was an attempt, a terrorist attempt in Madrid the day before! I couldn't believe my eyes!

## 15'27" BACK IN SPAIN

**Not long after he'd returned, Ramon's brother and his father both passed away. This hit him hard, and his own health deteriorated. For ten days, he was in a coma. He spent almost a year in hospital, suffering from depression. When he came out, he had nothing.**

STEVE: Where were you living at this time?

RAMON: I was on the street.

STEVE: Here in Barcelona?

RAMON: Yeah. On and off, probably about, I would say, 6 or 7 months, one year. And..... to tell you the truth, I didn't wanna live. First time in my life, I didn't wanna live.

*(MUSIC: The Task – Sheridan Tongue)*

**But as time went on, Ramon realised he DID want to live. After a year on the streets, his thoughts turned from suicide... to survival. He was going to fight, to change his life. He looked to his mother and her family for inspiration – as people from the Basque region of Spain, he believed in their strength of character.**

RAMON: My mother is Basque, my grandfather was in Basque Country in the civil war... my grandfather was in a concentration camp, and he died when he was 99, and his father was 103, so I know they were very strong people.

**With the help of friends, charities, and a few odd jobs, eventually Ramón scraped his way off the streets, and into shared, basic accommodation. After a while, he'd saved enough money to live on his own... and then he heard about Hidden City Tours. He called the boss – Lisa Grace – and she could tell straight away that he was going to fit in.**

**17'26" LISA & VOXES**

LISA: He's a charming man with a warm heart, he's funny ... He's just an interesting guy. You know, because he's older, he's 66, so he's lived a lot. I don't think I know even a quarter of Ramon's story!

*(RAMON TOUR: ...next to the Cathedral, and we're gonna go to one of my favourite place...)*

**Ramon is one of several, previously-homeless people working with Hidden City Tours. It's a social enterprise that trains them up, and employs them as guides – so they get paid for each of the tours they lead. And that helps them to get back what they once had.**

LISA: These are, we have an architect, ~~an ex-chef~~, a professional translator of books – university educated people. Educated professionals who have just found themselves on the street due to the recent crisis. It's been a long, hard, economic downturn, and many people – unexpected people – have found themselves in



situations. This is a whole new image of, not the bearded, dirty, rag-clad man who's sleeping underneath a bridge, OK? This is a very different profile. Some people say to me, are your guys really homeless? I'm not sure I believe it, they're well dressed... Well, you don't have to look like that to be living on the streets.

*(RAMON TOUR: ...so we're going over there...)*

**Today, Ramón is proud to be one of the company's star guides, showing off Barcelona's traditional sights, and leading tourists into the grittier parts of town.**

*(RAMON TOUR: ...one of my favourite stops, with a lot of history, and a lot of contrasts, and probably you love it...)*

**He's also designed a special "gastronomic tour" around the city's tapas bars and food markets.**

*(RAMON TOUR: ...you're free to take pictures, too!)*

WOMAN: It's very good to be with Ramon. He show us the most beautiful place, the most products... (you like food, cooking?) Yes...

~~LISA: I suppose the good thing about our project is it provides a happy ending — it's about ambition, pride... It's about picking yourself up and saying, yes, I am worth it. I have some income, and have regained pride. And I'd like to get back or try to get back to where I was before.~~

MAN: It's just the beginning for him. It's just human initiative, and I think it's the beauty of this story.

STEVE: So the initiative to literally drag yourself off the streets...

MAN: He was collapsed into the worst horror in your life, family disappearing, everything ... and out of the kind of human turmoil he found his feet again... It's the story, basically, which I came for. So instead of having the famous tour, and seeing all the buildings around, I'm not enriched by a person by that – but THIS enriches me. Seeing that human blossoms after a kind of a crisis in life – it warms my heart.  
(fx fades)

*MUSIC: Kate Tampest – Bad Place For A Good Time*

## **21'03" CLOSING SECTION**

**Almost every day of the year, Ramon and his fellow guides lead tourists around what they describe as the "real" Barcelona. But what about their old friends and associates, the thousands of people who STILL live on the streets? How do THEY react when they see Hidden City Tours go past them?**

RAMON: They – they’re happy for what I’m doing, even some of them are proud in some ways! But others, they are very sick, on drugs or whatever – I recognise them, they don’t recognise me, and you know... I meet people regularly – they are institutionalised. They don’t see they can go out and make their own thing, ~~to certain extent~~, and they prefer to be on that line. Got to get some clothes here, got to eat here, got to sleep there, it’s like a circle. ~~But I think that’s the mentality.~~

**This has always been a subject close to Ramon’s heart – even before his own time on the streets, and before the death of his brother.**

RAMON: I remember one time with my brother, we was in New York, we was running like hell – and we see a vagabond sleeping on the water. And I said “Charlie – let’s go take him home.” We took him home. We bought him a bottle of wine. He was unbelievable! He was speaking seven languages. He was a millionaire in his life, before, on Wall Street! His life was unbelievable.

STEVE: What had happened to him? Did he tell you?

RAMON: Yes, he told us his story. He lost his wife, he got some problems in business, and so he just give it up, and – simple.

STEVE: And you decided to take him home?

RAMON: Yes, we take him home...

STEVE: Did he stay with you that night?

RAMON: That night, yes, we give him a few bucks in the morning, breakfast and... so... that’s what people should give more to people they see lying down in ~~places, in~~ the streets, you know? Some respect and some love. I understand when things happen, they go overboard, fights, alcohol..... but when we provoke people like that, I don’t accept that. To me, that’s an abuse.

STEVE: What can you do about homelessness? Do you give money? Stop and talk?

RAMON: I think it’s very important. Talk to them. Don’t be scared. If they smell a little bit, put yourself a few feet away if you want – but talk to them. ...

STEVE: Is that what people living on the streets want? Presumably it is?

RAMON: They do. They do. Definitely – a big percentage of them, they do. And some of them go in the worse condition because they start like that, and each time some people treat them even worse – so that doesn’t help them. That put them down and down. And ~~there comes a time, even,~~ some of them they lost their mind. And we are part of that. We don’t realise. And it’s not a big thing – everybody can put a little bit. We are the solution.

24’57” speech ends

25’27” music ends

**BOB OUTRO:**

**Ramón Holgado Ordaz – one of the guides with Hidden City Tours in Barcelona.**

**Things are going well for Ramón: he loves his job, he has his own place to live... he's even getting on well with his ex-wife and his son, Raymond Anthony, who's now 27. And it seems father and son have a similar philosophy – not long ago, Raymond Anthony decided to take a break from work, so that he could volunteer at a soup kitchen in his home city of New York... where he served hot meals to homeless people.**

**“Barcelona: The View From The Streets” was produced by Steve Urquhart. You can hear more of Steve's pieces for Unfictional, on our website – where you can also see photos of Ramón leading one of the Hidden City Tours.**

< LINK for website: <http://www.hiddencitytours.com> >