

Madrid

Maribel's Guide to Madrid ©



Maribel's Guides for the Sophisticated Traveler™

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INDEX

Arriving at Madrid-Barajas Airport - Page 3
Transportation into the city - Page 5
Car Rental & Long Distance Buses - Page 8
Getting around the city - Page 9
Madrid Neighborhoods - Page 12
Monday Visits - Children's Favorites - Page 17
What's Free When - Page 18
Madrid's Golden Art Triangle - Page 19
Other Noteworthy Exhibit Spaces - Page 26
Worthwhile Small Museums - Page 28
Urban Green Spaces - Page 39
Sunday Morning Flea Markets - Page 40
Self-Guided Tours - Page 41
Guided Tours - Page 48
Gourmet Food & Wine Tours - Page 51
Cooking Classes - Page 53
Day Spas - Health Clubs - Pools - Page 54
Most popular Day Excursions - Page 56
Other Day-Trip Possibilities - Page 60
Covered Markets - Page 69
More Food Shopping - Page 74
Gastronomic Shopping Triangle - Page 77
My Favorite Shopping Haunts - Page 80
Gourmet Food Items To Take Home - Page 88
Fashion Shopping - Page 90
Shopping Refreshment Breaks - Page 92
Madrid Nightlife - Page 94
Craft Cocktails - Page 98
Madrid Lodging - Page 100
Recommended Hotels - Page 103
Tourist Passes - Madrid Card - VAT - Page 107
Safety Concerns - Page 108
Embassies & Tourist Offices - Page 109
Guide Books - Web Resources - Page 110
Travel Planning Services - Page 112

Madrid

Arriving at Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport

The stunning Terminal 4, and its satellite 4S, designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect Richard Rodgers, was opened to great critical acclaim in 2006 and retains its beauty. It's an extremely easy-on-the-eyes, light and airy, magnificent terminal that travelers seem to love. It's received rave reviews from passengers for its beauty, cleanliness and ease of use. The only complaints regarding T4 have to do with its enormous size - 760,000 square meters, with 76 see-through elevators, 15 moving walkways and 32 escalators! The walk from one end of the terminal to the other takes around 30 minutes, so allow ample time for connections.

Currently all Iberia and Air Nostrum flights depart from and arrive at T4, as well as those of the One World Alliance; American Airways, British Air, JAL, Cathay Pacific, etc. Flights on Iberia's low-cost carrier Vueling also depart from T4. Iberia has three very comfortable VIP lounges in T4 for those flying first or business class, with a great assortment of menu items.

High quality duty free shopping abounds, with stores such as Caroline Herrera, Zara, Mango, Sibarium (for wonderful gourmet products), merchandise from Loewe, Hermes, Cartier, Longchamp and Bulgari, as well as decent coffee and sandwich shops and places to sample Iberian ham, sushi (Kirei by Kabuki) and wines by the glass.

If you have an international flight from T4 to a country other than a Schengen member you will check in at T4 main building and then take a four-minute underground rail ride through the 2.8 km tunnel to your gate at Terminal 4S (satellite). All internal flights and Schengen member flights depart from T4, the main building rather than the satellite.

If you are flying on United, Delta, or other international carriers not members of One World, you will be landing at the less comfortable Terminal 1, which has been slowly undergoing major renovations, and have added a Kirei de Kabuki and Mama Framboise to the dining options. Low-cost airlines, such as Air Europa, Easy Jet and Ryanair (internal flights), depart from T1 and T2, so if you arrive at T1 on a transcontinental United or Delta flight, and need to connect to a Air Europa, or a Ryanair internal flight, you will not need to take a transfer bus.

Check which terminal each airline uses at: www.aena.es/csee/Satellite/Aeropuerto-Madrid-Barajas.

Transfers Between Terminals

To connect from Terminal 1 to an Iberia/Air Nostrum/Vueling internal flight departing from T4 you must transfer via a free 24-hour shuttle bus (called *autobús lanzadera*) that runs every 3 minutes. The transfer itself takes about 10 minutes, as Terminal 4 is four kilometers distance. The transfers run very smoothly.

Note: If you arrive on an international flight to Madrid at T1 and need to transfer to an internal flight from T4, you should leave a cushion of 1 hr 30 min to walk from your gate to passport control (it can be a very long walk), pick up your luggage, grab euros from an ATM downstairs, make your way upstairs to pick up the transfer bus, take the bus ride over to T4, check in your luggage at the long Iberia check-in lines, then find your gate in T4. Iberia's boarding starts 30 minutes prior to departure (Aena wants passengers take full advantage of the plentiful duty free shopping). Remember passengers must check in for an Iberia flight at least 45 minutes before the scheduled departure.

If you have arrived on an international carrier that is not a member of One World Alliance and need to recheck luggage on an internal Iberia flight, please note that Iberia permits each passenger in coach only one free piece of luggage weighing no more than 23 kilos. Business class passengers on Iberia are allowed two free checked bags. You will pay a hefty fee for each additional checked piece of luggage.

Iberia allows passengers only one carry-on weighing no more than 10 kilos, however we've never seen an Iberia employee enforce this weight limit.

Transportation Into The City To A City Center Hotel Or Rail Station

Below you'll find the various transfer options from the airport to downtown Madrid, from most expensive/quickest to cheapest/slowest. Decide what's best for you and your budget/time constraints.

By Taxi

You'll find a plethora of taxis waiting in their official line (taxi rank) outside terminals 1, 3 and 4. The fares are now set at a flat fee of 30€ between the airport (all terminals) and the city center (inside the Calle 30 ring road), with no additional supplements. The taxi from T4 to the city center takes about 25 minutes in normal traffic, a few minutes longer during rush hour.

There is a minimum fare of 20€ for destinations within 10 km of the airport, a 3€ supplement if going to or from a bus or rail station, and a supplement of 6,70€ on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve-between 9:00 pm and 7:00 am.

By Express Bus

There is a handy bus service from the airport, *Exprés del aeropuerto* (departing from T4, with stops at T1 and T2), to downtown with three stops. The first stop is on the corner of O'Donnell and Doctor Esquerdo in the Salamanca quarter, the second at Plaza de Cibeles, handy for many hotels and for the EMT night bus to Atocha station, and the third is at Atocha Station (between 6:00 am and 11:30 pm only). You can be at Atocha station in about 40 minutes in normal traffic.

The express bus runs every 15 minutes during the day, every 35 minutes after 11:30 pm, 365 days of the year. The cost is only 5€, with tickets purchased directly from the driver, but the driver will not accept bills larger than 20€.

These yellow buses run on natural gas, have bilingual signage and are equipped with Wi Fi and luggage racks (but critics say not enough).

By The Cercanías Train Suburban Commuter Rail

Line C1 runs every 30 minutes from T4 to the city center between 5:58 am and 10:57 pm: Chamartín station (13 min), Nuevos Ministerios (19 min), Atocha Renfe station (27 min), Méndez Álvaro (31 min) and Príncipe Pío stations (39 min) for bus connections. If your

flight lands at Terminal 1 (Delta, Easy Jet, Ryanair), or Terminal 2 (Lufthansa, Alitalia, Air France, KLM), you can take the free shuttle bus outside the arrivals hall to T4 to catch the Cercanías.

The Aeropuerto T4 station has wider turnstiles to allow for luggage.

The cost of a one-way ticket is 2,60€, but free for passengers with AVE tickets connecting with a flight. The ticket machines, red with an inverted C, have the option to choose English as your language. Choose your destination station, the number of tickets you wish to purchase, type of journey (one-way or return), and you'll see the total price displayed on the screen. Insert euros (up to a 20€ bill) and retrieve your tickets and change.

For those traveling from the airport to a hotel/hostal near the *Puerta del Sol*, the quickest route is to take the C-1 Cercanías train from Terminal 4 to the Chamartín stop, then transfer to a C-4A, C-4B or C-3 train to the *Sol* commuter rail station.

See the timetable at: www.renfe.com/viajeros/cercanias. You can also download the free *Renfe Cercanías* app at the iTunes Store.

By Metro

The Madrid metro, which operates from 6:05 am to 1:30 am daily, has a station at T4, called “*aeropuerto T4*” with stops at T1, 2 and 3. Line 8 (**pink line**) goes from the airport to Nuevos Ministerios in 12-15 minutes. From Nuevos Ministerios you can transfer to another line (or make two transfers) to reach your city center hotel. From the international arrivals area of Terminal 1 to the metro station, located between Terminals 2 and 3, is about a 15-minute walk. You can check the schedule for Line 8 at: www.metromadrid.es, or download the free *MetroMadrid* app at the iTunes Store.

The single fare for Metro Zone A, plus the airport supplement of 3€, is 4,50€ to a maximum of 5€, depending on how many stations you need to travel to from the airport. Passengers who already hold a 10-ride Metrobús pass (12,20€) must pay the airport supplement to use Line 8 to or from the airport. Travelers holding the Madrid Card do not pay the supplement, but the pricey Madrid Card is seldom worth the money.

Tickets, including the money saving, sharable, 10-ride Metrobús pass, are available at the self-service ticket machines located at the entrance to the metro station serving Terminals 1-3 and at Terminal 4. You can add as many stops (0,10€ each) to the 10-ride ticket as you need.

This transfer via metro may be the lengthiest or most tedious public transit journey from the airport to your hotel, taking longer than the Cercanías light rail or the Airport Express bus as during the morning and evening rush hours metro cars can be jam packed and some lines

plagued with pickpockets, so you should not attempt this with a combination of bulky suitcases and jet lag. Also, metro stations have many stairs that can make a trip from airport to hotel with heavy luggage a chore.

I recommend the metro transfer only for backpackers and the budget minded with a full hour or so to spare to reach their downtown hotel. The journey from Terminal 4 to the Vodafone Sol metro stop, for those staying at hotels near the Puerta del Sol, takes just over 43 minutes, involving two transfers.

To find the best metro route from the airport to the metro stop closest to your hotel, check online at: www.metromadrid.es, or use the MetroMadrid app to plan your route.

By City Bus

City bus route 200 goes from terminals T1, T2, T3 and T4 to the Avenida de América Transport Hub, where you can connect to other city and intercity bus routes and the metro, while the city bus route 101 runs from terminals T1, T2 and T3 to the Canillejas Transport Hub. A one-way ticket is 1,50€.

By Aerocity 24-hour Shuttle Service

The regular shuttle service is 17,85€ for two passengers, tax included. The **Express Service**, without intermediary stops, would be 34€, for up to 3 passengers, which is more than the normal taxi fare.

By Private Transfer

Stars Madrid offers limousine service from the airport to your hotel or apartment for 56€ for up to 3 people. This is more than the cost of a taxi, but you'll have an English speaking chauffeur waiting outside baggage claim with a placard with your name on it, ready to deliver you in style. There is a 20€ surcharge for transfers between 7:00 pm and 7:00 am, weekends and holidays.

Car Rental At Madrid-Barajas

If you're arriving in Madrid and plan on heading immediately to another destination by rental car, you should arrange your rental before arriving in Spain to obtain the best possible rate. We've had excellent service over the years using the consolidator/wholesaler Auto Europe, or its sister company Kemwel, whose preferred suppliers in Spain are Europcar, Avis and Hertz.

The following multinational agencies have counters in both Terminals 1 and 4:

- Hertz
- Europcar
- Avis/Budget
- Enterprise/Atesa
- Sixt

Long Distance Buses

There are three long distance bus services departing from the airport; ALSA, Avanzabus and Socibus.

- **ALSA** buses depart from terminal T4 for Zaragoza, Barcelona, Valladolid, León, Murcia, Alicante, Gijón, Oviedo, Lugo, Coruña, Santiago de Compostela, Burgos, Vitoria-Gasteiz, San Sebastián-Donostia, Santander, Bilbao, Logroño and Pamplona, among other destinations.
- **Avanzabus** departs from terminal T1 with routes to Castellón, Salamanca and Valencia. Other destinations are available from Madrid.
- **Socibus** also departs from terminal T1 with services to Aranda de Duero, Burgos, Ayamonte, Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Miranda de Ebro, Cadiz, Huelva, Ayamonte, Jerez, Tarifa, Cordoba, Sevilla, San Sebastián-Donostia and Irun.

City Transportation

Taxi

Madrid taxis are relatively inexpensive and extremely plentiful. The official taxis are white with a diagonal red strip on the front door. The green light and a *libre* sign on the windshield indicate that they are available. You can flag them down easily on the street except on New Year's Eve, when taxi drivers don't start working until 2:00 am. There are now over 16,000 taxis in the metropolitan area.

The meter runs faster after 11:00 pm, and as mentioned above, there is a 3€ supplement for fares originating from train/bus station taxi ranks, also to or from the IFEMA congress center in the Parque Ferial Juan Carlos I. There is an additional 6,70€ surcharge on December 24 and 31 between 9:00 pm and 7:00 am. For a fourth passenger (in a taxi authorized to carry 5 people-not all are), there is a 1€ supplement. A maximum of six supplements can be charged for any taxi run except for those on Christmas and New Years eve/morning, when the number of supplements charged can be seven. There is no charge for luggage carried in the trunk. As of 2016 the minimum taxi fare is 4€.

Tip up to 10% of the fare, but never more, Spaniards simply round up.

City Bus

Buses operate from 6:00 am until midnight. Buses 14, 27 and 45 will transport you up and down Castellana Boulevard to the Thyssen, Prado, Caixa Forum and Reina Sofia museums. Bus 27, in fact, is a handy "northern Madrid sightseeing bus" since it runs from Atocha in the south all the way up north, past the Bernabeu soccer stadium, to the twin towers at the Plaza Castilla. But beware of pickpockets on this line. After midnight there is a system of *búho* (owl) buses that run every half hour from 3:00 am and every hour from 3:00 to 6:00 am, but they are usually of little use to the average tourist.

The 10-ride ticket, *Bono Metrobús*, also called *bono transporte*, can be used on both the bus and metro system and only costs 12,20€, representing a significant savings off the cost of the individual tickets (1,50€ each). Multiple travelers in your party can share this ticket. Simply insert it into the machine behind the driver, and it will spit it back to you, and hand it to the next person in your party. If you plan to use public transportation during your stay, make sure to buy this 10-ride *bono*, which can be purchased at, tobacconists, called *Estancos*, and at any metro station. Some newspaper kiosks still sell the 10-ride bono, but some do not. You will have to ask.

And please remember that when purchasing a single ticket when boarding a bus the driver cannot change any bill larger than a 5€ note.

Metro

The metro system, open from 6:00 am to 1:30 am daily, is clean, user-friendly and efficient. Single metro rides cost the same as bus rides, 1,50€. If you plan to use the metro extensively, it is to your benefit to purchase a 10-ride bono Metrobús (see above). A trip to/from the Barajas airport requires a 3€ supplement to this *bono*. On the metro insert it in the turnstile, retrieve it and give it to the next person in your party to do the same.

At the metro ticket window ask for a *plano del metro*, a metro map. Or view it on line at metromadrid.es. To ascertain the quickest way to move from one location to another on the metro, use the very handy route calculator on the metro web site.

To find the best way to travel by bus, metro or suburban train from point A to point B, use the “Paths” route calculating service at **CRTM**. Select your language at the bottom of the page. You can also download the app on iTunes: Transporte de Madrid CRTM.

For further information about “getting around Madrid” by public transportation, see www.esmadrid.com/en/getting-around-madrid.

See the note below for the **Abono Transporte Turístico** for non-residents only, which may or may not be a money saver for your visit.

Cercanías - Suburban trains

These commuter trains connect Madrid with its suburbs from the new transportation hub beneath the Puerta del Sol and also connect Madrid’s two major rail stations, **Chamartín** and **Atocha** via two underground lines traversing the city from north to south. One line passes through the Puerta del Sol and another makes two intermediate stops at Nuevos Ministerios and Recoletos.

You might use a Cercanías train if you arrive on a train from the north (Paris, León, Valladolid or Segovia) at Chamartín station and need to connect to Atocha station to catch the high speed AVE to Barcelona, Valencia, Córdoba, Sevilla or Málaga. The Cercanías fare between the two rail stations is 2,70€, and tickets can be purchased at red machines with an inverted C sign or at a designated Cercanías ticket booth.

You might also use a Cercanías C3 train to travel from Madrid to **El Escorial**, departing from the Sol station or Chamartín. The C7 will take you to **Alcalá de Henares**, departing from Atocha, or take the C3 to **Aranjuez**, also departing from Sol or Atocha.

For train schedules see **Renfe**. Click on Cercanías on the left side of the English home page then choose Madrid. Fares determined by zones.

Note: Cercanías tickets can't be purchased online – they can only be purchased at the designated red machines. Look for the inverted C, and designated ticket booths at Chamartín or Atocha stations or at any ticket booth or machine at Madrid's Nuevos Ministerios or Recoletos stations. They may not be purchased in advance-only for the day of travel-but seats are not assigned. The underground line from Chamartín to Atocha is usually extremely crowded, so I try to avoid carrying more than a roll-aboard on this train.

Madrid Neighborhoods

Madrid de los Austrias

This, Madrid's oldest, most historic and atmospheric quarter, with its evocative tiny cobblestoned streets and archways, was named for the 17th-century Spanish monarchs, the Hapsburg Dynasty, and is home to *La Latina* a lively nightlife neighborhood with its tapas bar filled Cava Baja that stretches south from the Plaza Mayor. Here is where madrileños gather on Sunday afternoons for taking a caña or vermú and a pre-lunch aperitivo after the El Rastro flea market shuts down.

In Los Austrias you'll find several cloistered monasteries (Encarnación, Descalzas Reales) and lovely small churches (San Ginés), the Plaza Mayor, the Old City's most grandiose public square, Old Madrid's major thoroughfare, the Calle Mayor, Cuchilleros Street of Casa Botín fame and the Cava San Miguel, with its ancient taverns or mesones built within the bowels of the Plaza Mayor. Here you'll also find the tourist-filled iron and glass San Miguel Market and the Church of San Isidro, the patron saint of Madrid.

Palacio Real and Opera

The imposing, 3,000+ room Rococo style Bourbon Dynasty Royal Palace and its French-designed Sabatini Gardens dominate this section of the city, along with Almudena Cathedral, which hosted the wedding of King Felipe and Queen Letizia. Across the lovely square, the Plaza del Oriente, sits the neo-classical Royal Theater (Opera House) and further beyond the Senate.

Barrio de las Letras

Also referred as *Huertas*, which is actually the area below it, named for its bar and club filled main street. This "Literary Quarter" refers to the 17th century, Golden Age writers, Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca, who lived and wrote here. At its northern end sits the House of Parliament or Las Cortes and at its southern tip, Atocha rail station.

For the visitor it offers the most convenient neighborhood for a short visit to the city, as the major museums are nearby, it is blessed with an abundance of moderately priced hotels (One Shot, Ibis Styles, Vincci Soho, Room Mate Alicia, 3 members of Catalonia hotels), short term rental apartments, good value restaurants, from cheap to moderately priced (Terra Mundi, Maceiras, La Verónica, 3 members of the Oter group, Vinoteca Moratín, Triciclo and Tándem, Vi-Cool, Vietnam, La Huerta de Tudela), cafés for a quick and inexpensive breakfast (Huevos Rotos, Platería Bar Museo, El Azul de Fúcar, Chocolat), vegetarian-

friendly eateries (La Biótica), a cool jazz club, Spain's classical theater, a self-service laundry, and to equip a rental kitchen there are small markets, delis and wine shops.

Gran Vía

Madrid's "Grand Old Way", the entertainment epicenter of Madrid, is similar to Broadway, but sans skyscrapers, lined with many theaters, cinemas, fast food emporia, 3-4 star hotels, a FNAC and huge El Corte Inglés (at nearby Callao) and a few "working girls" on adjacent Calle Montera. At its lower end it boasts some stately 19th-century architecture capped with elegant sculpture. The Gran Vía feeds into the more noble Calle Alcalá at its southern end, and its northern tip it terminates at the Plaza de España with its statue of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza. Bustling at all hours, I find it not the quietest or most attractive place to stay given the constant frenzy of sidewalk activity and heavy traffic.

Sol

This is Madrid's epicenter, "the gate of the sun" and "kilometer zero", the dead center of Spain, from which all distances of Spain's roads are measured, the middle point of the country and where visitors will find a major underground transportation hub. It is also Madrid's "Times Square", where revelers come on New Year's Eve to gather under the clock tower to drink a sip of cava and eat twelve grapes during the final countdown to ring in the New Year.

Populated by fast food joints, gold & silver buyers, a classic pastry shop, La Mallorquina, many chain stores, the main (and giant) branch of Spain's only department store, El Corte Inglés, like the Gran Vía, it is a beehive of constant activity. Here sits Spain's largest Apple Store, behind the much-loved statue of the Oso y el Madroño, the Bear and the Strawberry Tree. From here one can walk north to the Gran Vía, south to La Latina, east to the lower House of Parliament, or west to the Royal Palace.

Lavapiés

This slowly gentrifying, decidedly working class quarter (the city's Jewish Quarter during the Middle Ages) is home to a large immigrant population, primarily from North Africa and the Middle East and is considered the most multicultural, diverse area of the city.

Decidedly blue collar, it appears both scruffy and endearingly bohemian and houses many cheap eateries (many offering vegetarian/vegan fare and Indian cuisine), Arab style teahouses, Arab baths (the Hammam Al Andalucía) and beloved old time bars around the Ribera de Curtidores, where the Sunday morning flea market, El Rastro, is held, an excellent

flamenco club, Casa Patas, the Cine Doré, the oldest cinema in the city, and two lively, and authentic covered markets.

Malasaña

A funky, counterculture, ultra hipster neighborhood for 20s and 30s somethings, some liken Malasaña to Manhattan's East Village; others see a resemblance to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, while others think of it as Madrid's version of Camden Town. Its main square is the Plaza Dos de Mayo, and it is nestled between the main streets of Fuencarral to the east and San Bernardo to the west. Just east of the trendy boutiques of Fuencarral, you'll find the up-and-coming (formerly sketchy) hipster neighborhood of Triball, tucked between Malasaña and Chueca.

Like Chueca to the south, Malasaña abounds in "cheap eats" plus indie boutiques, tattoo parlors, vintage bookshops, one cute boutique hotel (Abalu) and a plethora of late night bars for Gin Tonics and Mojitos. It has also become the center of the craft beer craze (La Tape, Fábrica Maravillas, Irreale). In the post-Franco late 70s and early 80s it witnessed the birth of the cultural, drug and sexual rebellion, "La Movida", immortalized in early Almodóvar movies.

Chueca

Madrid's "gay" district since its gentrification in the 90s, home to its LGBT community, which celebrates a riotous Gay Pride Parade on the last Saturday of June, but is welcoming and friendly to those of all persuasions. A center of nightlife, it is blessed with a plethora of late night bars and clubs and is also home to some bargain restaurants (Momo, Bazaar) and renovated, classic taverns (La Carmencita), hip hotels (Room Mate Oscar and Only You), a hip "cheap sleep" (Sidorme Fuencarral 52), trendy boutiques on Calles Almirante and Fuencarral, shoe outlets on Calle Augusto Figueroa and an attractive street market, Mercado de San Ildefonso, and an interesting indoor market/food court, the Mercado de San Antón, with a hugely popular rooftop restaurant/bar.

Chamberí

To some this section is known as Justicia because the Justice Palace sits there, some refer to it as Salesas because of the proximity of the Plaza de las Salesas. Another lovely square in this neighborhood is the Plaza Olavide. This lower section of Chamberí appears a bit NYC Soho-like, with some of the city's best food shopping (bakeries, pastry shops, chocolaterías), while the upper area of Chamberí, including Calles Almagro, Eduardo Dato and Fortuny, are as exclusive and lovely, architecture-wise, as Salamanca, with ultra chic restaurants and

beautiful mansions, some which house foreign embassies. Here in upper Chamberí, you'll find the jewel of small art museums, the Museo Sorolla.

Castellana-Recoletos-Paseo del Prado

These are the three names for the broad boulevard that divides Old Madrid from its modern expansion (Ensanche). It is the city's major north-south axis, stretching from Atocha rail station in the south to the leaning twin towers at the Plaza de Castilla in the north. For the visitor it is on this north-south axis starting at the mid-section, the Plaza Colón and moving down to Puerta de Atocha, where one will find Madrid's city hall/post office, the Palacio de Cibeles, and its major art museums/exhibit spaces: Fundación Mapfre Sala Recoletos, Thyssen-Bornemisza, Prado, Caixa Forum and finally, at its southern end, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

On this avenue tourists will also find 5-star hotels (Hesperia, Intercontinental, Villamagna, Meliá Gran Fénix, Mandarin Oriental Ritz, Westin Palace) glamorous watering holes for the rich and famous (Tatel, Punk Bach, Otto, Ten con Ten), the American Embassy and the Botanical Gardens, which sit just south of the Prado.

Salamanca

Madrid's most exclusive, affluent and elegant neighborhood was developed as an expansion to the city in second half of the 19th-century under the patronage of the Marquis de Salamanca. This is where the city's crème de la crème lives and does its luxury shopping in its posh international boutiques on the Golden Mile, between Calles Serrano and Ortega & Gasset. Here the visitor will also find distinguished 4-5 star hotels (Wellington, Unico, Adler), cosmopolitan restaurants on Calles Velázquez and Jorge Juan and beautiful architecture. New Yorkers may find it reminiscent of Manhattan's Upper East Side.

It begins east of Castellana Boulevard and just north of Retiro Park. From a Salamanca area hotel one can take a very pleasant half-hour walk to the Prado and reach the Puerta del Sol, Madrid's epicenter, via subway or bus in around 20 minutes. Here you will also find embassies, the Juan March Foundation and the lovely Fundación Lázaro Galdiano Museum.

Chamartín

Called such, as it is home to the northern city's rail station, it is the primarily international business and financial section of the city but not convenient for lodging the short-term visitor. It houses a large executive ex-pat community and one of the city's best indoor markets, along with elegant restaurants in the area around Calle Dr. Fleming, on its eastern side (DiverXO, 99 Sushi Bar, Sacha).

Retiro

This quiet, primarily upper middle class residential neighborhood sits directly east of Retiro Park, the city's most beautiful green space, with its artificial lake for canoeing, puppet theater, bike rentals, street artists, its Glass Pavilion that houses special exhibits from the Museo Reina Sofía and is THE place to stroll on a sunny Sunday morning.

This district has also become a haven for gourmet small plates dining. Come here on the evening to indulge in a “moveable feast” at one of its highly regarded gastrobars (La Catapa, Taberna Marcano, La Raquetista). It's also home to one of the city's best *marisquerías* (seafood temples), Casa Rafa.

Moncloa-Argüelles

Madrid's main public university, Universidad Complutense, is located in Moncloa on its northern end; thus, it's a young person's hangout with plenty of bars. On its main thoroughfare, Calle Princesa, you will find a large branch of El Corte Inglés and other Spanish chains. Its southern end abuts the Plaza de España. Paseo del Pintor Rosales, its prettiest promenade, faces the large Parque del Oeste, where one catches the cable car, Teleférico, to the Casa de Campo with its Zoo. At the southern end of Pintor Rosales at Ferraz you'll see an Egyptian temple, the Templo de Debod, a gift from the Egyptian government to the city.

Sights That Can Be Visited On Mondays

- Reina Sofía National Museum of Modern Art - until 2:30 pm
- Thyssen Bornemisza Museum - permanent collection only, from noon to 4:00 pm
- Royal Palace, Campo del Moro Gardens and Sabatini Gardens
- Almudena Cathedral
- Retiro Park
- Lázaro Galdiano Museum - until 3:30 pm
- Royal Tapestry Factory Museum - until 2:00 pm
- Caixa Forum
- Casa del Campo for amusement park/zoo/aquarium
- Fundación Mapre Sala de Recoletos - special art exhibits
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Bull fighting Museum (currently under renovation)
- Bernabeu soccer stadium

Sights That Children Enjoy

- Parque de Atracciones (Amusement Park) in the Casa de Campo
- Retiro Park's puppet theater
- Teleférico (cable car)
- Price Circus Theater
- Museum on Natural Science
- Dreams Ice Palace
- Zoo-Aquarium in the Casa de Campo
- Warner Brothers Park - open March-December
- Faunia
- Madrid Xanadú - for indoor skiing and giant shopping mall
- Planetarium
- Railroad Museum
- Naval Museum - for hundreds of model ships
- Wax Museum
- Real Madrid's Bernabeu soccer stadium
- Aquápolis Water Park de Villanueva de la Cañada - open July-September. To reach the park, take bus line 627 (Madrid-Brunete) from the Moncloa bus station (metro), departures every 10 minutes.

What's Free and When

Museums & Music

- **Prado Museum:** Monday-Saturday from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, Sundays and holiday from 5:00 to 7:00 pm, with a 50% discount for the temporary exhibits. Also free on May 18.
- **Reina Sofía Museum:** Monday and Wednesday-Saturdays from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, Sunday from 1:30 to 7:00 pm. Also free on April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6, and free for those under 18, over 65 and the disabled.
- **Thyssen-Bornemisza:** Permanent collection is free every Monday from noon to 4:00 pm.
- **San Antonio de la Florida Hermitage:** Tuesday-Friday from 9:30 am to 8:00 pm. Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.
- **Archaeology Museum (MAN):** Tuesday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 8:00 pm. Sundays and holidays from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm.
- **Templo de Debod:** Always free, but closed on Mondays. In August it's only open from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.
- **Lázaro Galdiano Museum:** Tuesday-Saturday from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Sunday from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Free to children under 12.
- **Sorolla Museum:** Saturdays after 2:00 pm. All day Sunday, May 18, October 12, November 16 and December 6. Free to those over 65, under 18 and the disabled.
- **San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts:** Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- **Museum of Decorative Arts:** Sundays, Thursday afternoons, May 18, November 16, October 12 and December 6. Free to those under 18, over 65, and the disabled.
- **Costume Museum:** Saturdays after 2:30 pm, Sundays, April 18, May 18, October 12, and December 6. Free to those under 18, over 65, and the disabled.
- **The Americas Museum:** Sundays, April 18, May 18, October 12, and December 6. Free to those under 18, over 65, and EU and Latin American citizens (ID required).
- **Fundación Caja Madrid** (for joint art exhibits with the Thyssen): Always free.
- **Fundación Canal** (for special exhibits): Always free.
- **Sala BBVA** (art exhibits): Always free.
- **Fundación Mapfre Recoletos** (art exhibits): Always free.
- **Fundación Juan March** - Free lunchtime concerts on Mondays at noon. First Monday of each month at 7:00 pm, Saturday concerts at noon.
- **Fundación BBVA** - Free concerts. One needs to reserve by phone: (+34) 913 745 400, or email: musica@fbbva.es.

Madrid's Golden Art Triangle

The Golden Art Triangle, the *Paseo del Arte*, the Art Walk, consists of the three “must see” museums, the Prado, the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, plus the Caixa Forum Cultural Center.

One can buy a pass for admission to the big three, called the Abono Paseo del Arte, for 25,60€, a savings of 3,40€. I have bought mine at the Reina Sofía where the lines move more quickly. You can also purchase it at the Goya ticket booths at the Prado, but to enter the Prado one needs to show the Paseo de Arte pass at the Goya ticket center to exchange it for a Prado specific entrance ticket.

The pass is valid for a one-time visit to each museum and valid for one year. But it is not valid for special exhibits at the Thyssen and Prado that require a separate ticket. Also, the Prado and Reina Sofía now have hours when entrance is free. So it may not be worth it to you if you plan to attend these special shows or go to those two museums during their admission-free periods.

For the smaller, state-run museums, not including the Prado, Thyssen or Reina Sofía, two passes exist, the first for visiting four museums within 10 days, that costs 8€, and the second, which allows visits to eight museums within 15 days, for 16€.

The Museo del Romanticismo, Museo Nacional de Antropología (MAN), Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Museo del Traje, Museo Cerralbo, Museo de América, Museo Arqueológico Nacional and Museo Sorolla participate in this program and the passes can be purchased at their ticket windows.

Prado Museum

The great masters of Spanish painting (the Baroque giants, Velázquez, Ribera, Murillo and Zurbarán, along with El Greco and Goya) are all found at the Prado Museum. A vast and tiring space, it's best to concentrate on the Spanish masterpieces rather than try to see it all there is in one visit.

The Prado is open Monday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm and on Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. Open from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on December 24 and 31 and January 6. Closed January 1, May 1 and December 25.

The principal entrances for individuals to the Prado are through the center Velázquez door facing the Paseo del Prado, Goya door, facing the Hotel Ritz and the Jerónimos wing entrance. The Jerónimos wing currently houses an information desk, the cloakroom (backpacks must be checked here), museum store, an auditorium, the cafeteria, Café Prado, and the special exhibition halls

Just beyond the Velázquez entrance facing the Paseo del Prado you'll find the information desks. The museum has a café in the new Rafael Moneo-designed Jerónimos wing and a gift shop. The first floor galleries are always crowded with groups.

Admission is 15€, which includes access to the permanent and temporary exhibits. There is a 1€ fee for booking online. Add the official guide for 9€. The *Paseo del Arte* Card is 25,60€. Those who purchase tickets in advance can avoid the long lines.

Note: If you hold a ticket for a special show housed in the Jerónimos wing, it's quicker and less confusing to enter through the Jerónimos door in the annex at the northern end of the museum, behind the Goya Sales Point. The southern entrance, the Murillo door in the Villanueva original building, is for groups only.

If you don't opt for the Prado audio guide, you might want to purchase the mini guide "Masterpieces of the Prado" in the gift shop before making your assault. In each major room you'll also find small explanatory brochures available in several languages (however, sometimes they run out of the English pamphlets). The Prado Guide in digital format (permanent collection only) is available to download at: www.museodelprado.es/en/apps/the-prado-guide. The cost of the guide is 5,99€.

Audio guides are available in several languages for 4€ for the permanent collection, 3,50€ for the temporary exhibits, or 6€ for a combo. And remember that visitors may now book online for both temporary exhibits and general admission: www.entradasprado.com. You can also download a PDF map of the museum to get acquainted with this vast space before your assault!

The Velázquez rooms are 16, 16B, and 27-29. *El Greco* is in rooms 9A-10A. *Ribera* and *Murillo* are in rooms 25-26. *Goya* can be found in rooms 32, and 34-38, his macabre black paintings are on the ground floor in rooms 64-67 and 75, while his light and airy tapestry designs are found on the top floor in rooms 85, and 90-94.

Once inside the main Villanueva building, rent your audio guide, 3,50€ for permanent collection/temporary exhibit or combo for 5€, pick up your map, head straight up to the second floor to the Grand Hall, where you'll find the huge canvases of the Spanish masters, the magnificent Spanish Baroque - *Ribera*, *Zurbarán*, *Velázquez* and *Murillo*. *Caravaggio* is also found off the Grand Hall in room 5, *Rembrandt* in room 7, *Rubens* in 8-9, *El Grecos* in 9A, 10A, *Zurbarán* in 18 A, *Ribera* in 25, *Murillo* in 26.

Keep going and hit the other Velázquez rooms first (16, 16B and 27-29), as they become very crowded very quickly. Then move on to the end of this floor (rooms 32, 34-38) to view *Goya's* court portraits at far end of Grand Hall. Then move to the light-filled renovated rooms

upstairs on the 3rd floor (85, 90-94) where you'll find the "happy" Goya rooms. His "cartones", the designs for tapestries, are hung there along with his Majas.

On the ground floor you'll find Goya's lugubrious *Black Paintings* (such as Saturn Devouring his Son) in rooms 64, 65 and 67 along with Italian masterpieces of Mantegna, Raphael, Bellini, Tiepolo, Tintoretto, Veronese, plus the Dutch masters, Van der Weyden, Dürer and Hieronymus Bosch's masterpiece, "*The Garden of Earthly Delights*" Bosch has his own room, 56A. In Spanish, he's known as "*El Bosco*".

Note: From time to time the museum redistributes paintings to different rooms, so the current distribution may be different from the rooms mentioned above. But if you have a limited time for the Prado and want to see the very best of its Spanish collection, I would concentrate on the El Greco, Velázquez, Ribera, Murillo and Goya rooms.

For a coffee or lunch break

After a visit to the Prado

The Café Prado in the museum is open from 9:00 am to 7:30 pm (30 minutes before the museum closes), and serves a daily set menu, 3-course lunch for 20€. In the summer months, an outdoor café is set up at the Jerónimos door, which is open from 11:00 am to 8:30 pm.

If you find the Café Prado just too busy after your visit, you can cross the avenue, Paseo del Prado, to a nice and reasonably priced wine bar, Bar Museo La Platería, in the Plaza de Platerías, where Calle Moratín and Calle Huertas converge, for a late breakfast, gourmet tapas, a *plato del día*, and wines by the glass, for reasonable prices, and with very reasonably priced cocktails and digestifs served at night. It also has an outdoor terrace. Open weekdays until 1:00 am, Fridays and Saturdays until 2:00 am, and Sundays until midnight. English menu is available.

Also on the square is **La Tapería del Prado**, a friendly, "coffee shop" type of place where you can have tapas, a small plates meal, or drinks. Open daily until 2:00 am.

Or walk up a few steps to **Bodeguilla Los Rotos** at pedestrianized Calle Huertas, 74. This bargain spot is a replica of the popular Bodeguilla Los Rotos in the Riojan capital of Logroño. A *roto* here is a creamy mixture of broken eggs fried up in a skillet along with your choice of other ingredients such as chistorra, ratatouille, mushrooms, or *gulas*, served in hollowed out bread. These cost very little and make for a very filling breakfast or snack. It also serves as a handy spot for those staying in the Spain-Select apartments on Lope de Vega. The tavern opens for breakfast at 8:00 am with an offering of continental breakfast for under 5€.

If you're looking to lunch in a more sophisticated setting, the Cask restaurant of the Hotel Radisson Blu Prado, which is also in the plaza, serves a great value set menu for lunch for only 16,50€, served daily from 12:30 to 4:00. Can be reserved online at: eltenedor.es

Tel: (+34) 915 242 626

Bar Museo la Platería, La Tapería and Cast have outdoor terraces on this square.

Behind the Prado, at Ruiz de Alarcón, 27, Carolina Herrera's favorite hang out (whose owners are also Venezuelan), you'll find the Murillo Café, open for breakfast, weekend brunch, lunch, tapas, dinner, drinks, Monday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 1:30 am and on Sunday from 12:00 pm to 6:30 pm.

San Jerónimo el Real

While in the Prado neighborhood, walk east to visit Madrid's most elegant church, dating from the 16th-century. It's located just east of the Prado's new Jerónimos wing on Calle de Moreto. The cloister, suffering over the years from neglect, was renovated and incorporated into Navarran architect Rafael Moneo's extension of the Prado. The church is Madrid's only example of neo-Gothic style and is where former King Juan Carlos was crowned in 1975 upon the death of Franco and end of the dictatorship.

Open September to June, Monday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 5:00 to 8:00 pm - from 6:00 to 8:30 pm in July and August. On Sundays it's open from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm and 5:30 to 8:00 pm - from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and 6:00 to 8:30 pm in July and August.

Museum Thyssen-Bornemisza

The Thyssen-Bornemisza on the Paseo del Prado is often called a one-stop survey, a quick lesson in the history of Western Art from the 13th to the 20th centuries, beginning with the early Siena school and ending with Mondrian, Hopper, Pollock, Lichtenstein and Warhol. Or call it a collection of "great masterpieces of lesser-known painters" or "lesser known paintings of great masters", including the "*Portrait of a Young Man*" by Raphael, a self-portrait by Rembrandt, Monet's "*Charing Cross Bridge*" and Constable's "*The Lock*". Some painters you will never have heard of and some paintings of the great masters you will have never known.

A stunning 16-room annex was opened in the summer '04 to house 200 works of the Baroness Thyssen, Carmen Cervera's personal private collection ranging from 17th to the 20th century, which I find even more impressive than her late husband's collection. This wing added 800 square meters of floor space to the museum. One can easily spend two

hours getting to know these rooms. You'll be most impressed by this amazing and equally vast collection.

Before the Spanish government purchased the collection for \$350 million, it was the largest private collection in the world, belonging to the industrialist Baron Heinrich Thyssen - another small collection from the late Baron's vast art holdings is housed in the National Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona (MNAC).

To see the original Thyssen collection in chronological order, which will take at least two hours, start at the second floor and work your way down. The special exhibits are in a separate wing to the right of the entrance. These temporary exhibits require a special timed ticket (15-minute intervals beginning at 10:00 am, ending at 6:00 pm), which can be purchased online (and picked up at the first ticket window to your left), or purchased at the ticket windows. The line generally moves quickly. Before entering the exhibit at your appointed time, you can rent an exhibit audio guide at the dedicated booth in the hallway. A visit to special exhibits usually takes about an hour.

This is a museum that is comfortable, up-to-date and really works well. ATM downstairs. Great gift shop and handy café, both open to the public without a ticket. Plus a restaurant, El Mirador, which is located on the top floor of the annex offering multi-level outdoor dining. It's open only in summer and is quite fashionable.

Opening hours are Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm. Special exhibits are open Sunday-Friday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, and until 9:00 pm on Saturdays.

Admission to the permanent collection and temporary exhibits is now 12€. Reduced price tickets are 8€. And thanks to the sponsorship by Master Card, the permanent collections are now open on Mondays with free admission from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. Free to those over 65.

Audio guides cost 5€ for permanent collection, 4€ for the temporary exhibitions, and the combined audio guide is 7€.

The Paseo del Arte ticket (25,60€) is only good for the permanent collection.

Note: Because of the size and scope of both the Prado and the Thyssen, we recommend that visitors not try to take in both museums on the same day, although their special exhibits are easy and fairly quick sees.

For a coffee or lunch break

After a visit to the Thyssen

While the Thyssen has a cafeteria, and in summer opens its wonderful covered terrace, where you can sit back, relax and enjoy the breeze, if you'd like a tapas meal afterwards, we recommend the downstairs pintxos bar-Txoko in the Basque Cultural Center, Euskal Etxea, run by the **Sagardi Cocineros Vascos** group, at Calle Jovellanos, 3. It's just across the street from the Teatro de la Zarzuela, a 3-minute walk from the Thyssen, and open daily from 11:00 am until midnight.

If you'd like something more than a sandwich and can spare the time for a fantastic sit-down meal, we loved our recent post-museum lunch at **Askuabarra**. It's tucked away on narrow Calle Arlabán, No. 7, a 5-minute walk up Calle Zorrilla from the museum. It opens for lunch at 1:30 pm and dinner at 8:30, closed Mondays.

Tel: (+34) 915 937 507

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

The **Reina Sofía**, across from Atocha rail station on Santa Isabel, 52, is a vast space consisting of the Sabatini building, a former hospital, and the avant-garde and enormous €110,000,000 extension designed by Jean Nouvel, which has made the Reina Sofía one of the world's largest contemporary art museums.

To take in its most noteworthy works, take the elevator to the second floor where the permanent collection is housed and head straight for room 206 where you'll find the huge masterwork of this museum, Picasso's *Guernica*. Then continue on to the next rooms to see works by Dalí in room 205, Miró in 206-207, Juan Gris in room 208 and backtrack to more Miró in room 202 and works of the young Picasso in 201. Noteworthy paintings here are Picasso's "*Woman in Blue*", Dalí's "*Great Masturbator*", Gris's "*Guitar in Front of the Sea*" and Solana's "*Gathering at the Café de Pombo*".

The 4th floor rooms have a less compelling collection of 20th to 21st century Spanish art, so you need not waste time on them unless you're a very avid contemporary art enthusiast. Again, the masterpieces are all located together on the 2nd floor (for now, but plans to reconfigure the entire space are in the works...).

Open Mondays and Wednesday-Saturday, from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm, Sunday from 10:00 am to 2:15 pm for the entire collection and 2:15 pm to 7:00 pm for the temporary exhibit. From April-September the museum remains open until 10:00 pm. Closed on Tuesdays and January 1 and 6, May 1 and 15, November 9, December 24, 25 and 31.

Tickets for the permanent collection, plus temporary exhibits, are 8€. Temporary exhibits only are 4€. The Royal Palace-Museo Reina Sofía combined ticket is 14€. Entry is free on

Monday and Wednesday-Saturday from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Sunday from 1:30 pm to 7:00 pm. Also free April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

For a coffee or lunch break

After a visit to the Reina Sofía

If your hunger calls after your heavy dose of Dalí, Picasso and Miró, and you'd like something more than a sandwich, more creative fare, you can have just a coffee or a continental breakfast after a visit or beer/wine/ tapas or small plates at the new branch of the well-regarded gastro bar **Arzábal**, connected to the museum itself (with separate entrance on the left side, below the steps).

Make a lunch of creamy croquettes, *ensaladilla rusa*, shrimp in garlic sauce, a mini burger, skillet eggs with truffles or their famous oven baked potatoes, *patatas a la importancia*. It's open for breakfast at 9:00 am and stays open until 2:00 am for after dinner drinks.

The Arzábal boys, Iván Morales and Alvaro Castellanos, have spent a great deal of money and planning on this, their fourth and largest Madrid dining space, and we find its secluded, interior garden terrace quite appealing for a late night cocktail or glass of champagne during the steaming Madrid summers. Open daily.

If you have picky tweens/teens in tow who only eat pizza or pasta (teens seem to love the Reina Sofía masterpieces, especially Dalí), you need only to head across the square to a branch of the popular and inexpensive Montecarlo based **Pinocchio Trattoria** chain at Sánchez Bustillo, 5.

Or if you'd like to partake of tapas in a typical Madrid tavern atmosphere, head up Calle Santa Isabel to **La Musa de Espronceda** at No. 17, which is between the Reina Sofía and the Filmoteca Nacional. Have tapas at the bar or a sit down meal of croquettes, monkfish brochette, fried eggplant, pork tenderloin. It opens for lunch from 12:30 to 4:00 and in the evening from 7:00 until midnight. Closed Sunday evening, all day Monday and during August.

Other Noteworthy Exhibition Spaces

On the Art Walk, Paseo del Arte

Caixa Forum - Madrid

This much photographed, much talked about social and cultural center at Paseo del Prado, 36 was inaugurated in February '08. Designed by the Swiss architects/ Pritzker Prizewinners Herzog & de Meuron, authors of the Tate Modern, it represents yet another architecturally exciting addition to Madrid's Museum Mile. The Caixa Forum is a brilliant restoration and expansion of an 1899 brick and cast iron power station, Central Eléctrica del Mediodía, one of the last surviving pieces of Industrial Age architecture in the city. The most talked about and photographed part of the complex is its 24-meter high "vertical garden", designed in collaboration with the botanist Patrick Blanc. As is the policy at its sister Caixa Forum space in Barcelona, admission is always free for Caixa Bank account holders.

In addition to its permanent collection and temporary exhibits, the center offers concerts, films and poetry recitals. Please check the web page before your arrival for any temporary exhibit that may run during your stay. We recently saw a wonderful "Women of Roman" exhibit of statues from the Louvre, along with an exhibit of Miró's objects and paintings.

Open daily, including holidays, from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, but closes at 6:00 pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Closed on December 25, January 1 and 6.

Admission is 4€ to non-bank customers. Free on May 15 (San Isidro feast day) and November 9.

On the top floor, the museum operates a bar-café, which is open throughout the day. To the right is a dining area where a bargain menú del día is served on weekdays and offers a special menu on weekends - to the right of that you have a la carte dining.

Across the street is the handy Vertical Café.

*Royal Botanical Gardens**

Take a stroll through the Royal Gardens next to the Prado. In January and February the gardens are open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, March and October until to 7:00 pm, April and September it's open until 8:00 pm, and in May-August until 9:00 pm, closing at 6:00 pm in November and December. Admission is 3€, 1,50€ for students with accreditation. Free to seniors 65+ and children under 10.

*Fundación Mapfre Sala Recoletos**

One of two temporary exhibit spaces of the Fundación Mapfre is housed in a 19th-century palace at Paseo de Recoletos, 23, just north of the Museo Thyssen between the Plaza Cibeles and Plaza Colón. Its temporary exhibits feature painting from the years between 1880 and WWII. We have seen some highly compelling exhibits here since it opened in '08, such as “Impressionism: a Renaissance”, “Picasso and the Workshop”, “Sorolla and the United States”, “The Splendor of Romanesque” and the recent Pierre Bonnard retrospective. Admission is always free (so expect long lines on weekends). Audio guides rent for 3€.

Open Mondays from 2:00 pm to 8:00, Tuesdays-Saturdays from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, Sundays and holidays from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm. Open 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on December 24 and 31, closed December 25, January 1 and 6.

Worthwhile Small Museums

One can now purchase two special passes for the smaller, state-run museums. The first is to visit four museums within 10 days and costs 8€; the second includes eight museums within 15 days and costs 16€. These passes can be purchased at each museum's ticket window. Museums included in these passes are: Museo del Romanticismo, MAN (Museo Nacional de Antropología), Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Museo del Traje, Museo Cerralbo, Museo de América, Museo Arqueológico Nacional and Museo Sorolla.

*Museo Sorolla**

At General Martínez Campos, 37, this wonderful small museum is the lovely, perfectly preserved studio/home of the Valencian born, 19th-century Spanish Neo-Impressionist, Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863-1923), whose murals can be seen at the Hispanic Society in N.Y.. Sorolla spent the last 13 years of his life here and was the exponent of "Luminism", the celebration of light in painting. Upon the painter's death his widow sold the building to the Spanish State and it was transformed into a museum in 1932. This is a delightfully quiet, serene, turn-of-the-century mansion/atelier, which you can often have virtually to yourself. The artist himself designed the gardens, and he planted myrtles brought from the Alhambra.

It's a hidden treasure that also serves as a decorative arts museum with its fine original furnishings, lamps, and a stupendous collection of ceramics from Manises, Valencia. Audio guides are available. A short video of the painter's life (in Spanish) is shown downstairs where you'll find an exquisite Andalusian patio, along with the painter's extensive ceramic collection. It's Iberian Traveler's favorite Madrid museum, and a national treasure.

Open Tuesday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 8:00 pm and on Sundays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, when it's free. Closed Mondays and on January 1, May 1, December 24, 25 & 31 and local holidays. Admission is 3€, free to those under 18 and EU citizens over 65. It is also free on May 18, October 12, and December 6.

You can reach the museum by taking bus 27 from Paseo del Prado that runs up to Castellana Boulevard (Paseo de la Castellana), and get off at the Glorieta de Emilio Castelar roundabout, just south of the Intercontinental Hotel and north of the American Embassy, then walk 1-1/2 blocks west on Paseo de Martínez Campos.

For a lunch break

After a visit to the Sorolla

If you are in need of lunch after your visit, we recommend a short walk down and west to Calle Rafael Calvo, 20, to the very popular Las Tortillas de Gabino, where the specialty is

the delicious potato and egg omelet served up in many guises. It's a 3-minute walk from the museum.

With a prior reservation on eltenedor.es, head west on Paseo Martínez Campos to Calle del Castillo, 16, a tiny street behind Calle Santa Engracia, for a fantastic value at **Bacira***, one of the city's most sought after tables, offering very well-executed Spanish-Asian fusion fare in a pleasant bistro atmosphere with attentive service and a truly unparalleled €13,90 weekday lunch menu. A recent lunch here wowed us with its fine price-quality ratio. It's a 10-minute walk from the museum.

Or if you're a sushi lover, then walk up and over (about 6 minutes) to Calle Viriato, 58, to the new and elegant Soy de Pedro Espinosa for some of the cities best sushi.

*Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes**

The Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, located at Calle de Alcalá, 13, on the premises of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, housed in an 18th-century palace designed by Churrigera, has as an impressive collection of artwork surpassed only by the Prado and the Thyssen - 1,400 paintings, 600 sculptures and an outstanding collection of decorative arts. The museum is strong on Spanish, Flemish, and Italian Baroque masters. Works of Velázquez, Murillo, Rubens, Ribera, Zurbarán, also a special room with 13 works by Goya, plus works by El Greco, Sorolla, even Juan Gris.

Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, including holidays. Closed January 1 and 6, May 1 and 30, December 24, 25 and 31, and all of August. General admission is 8€, reduced admission is 4€ for seniors over 65. Free for those under 18, and free for all on non-holiday Wednesdays, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

Metro: Sevilla

For a lunch break

If you are in need of lunch after your visit, we recommend a short walk over to the Iberostar Hotel de las Letras on the Gran Vía where chef Paco Morales now supervises the kitchen of the completely resigned hotel restaurant, **Al Trapo**.

*Museo Lázaro Galdiano Foundation**

Located in the Barrio de Salamanca neighborhood, at the northern end of Calle Serrano, 122, near María de Molina, the Museum Lázaro houses one of Spain's preeminent private art collections. It was reopened several years ago after a two-year long renovation and expansion project. I highly encourage you to visit this gem housed in a four-story Italianate mansion, which displays the most impressive private collection of the 19th century financier,

journalist, publisher and arts patron, José Lázaro Galdiano. He bequeathed this enormous treasure of 15,000 objects, considered the largest and most important art collection in Spain at that time, to the state upon his death in 1947. Only 750 of these treasures are displayed at a time.

The collection includes paintings, sculpture, clocks and watches, furniture, ivory, Limoges enamels, Persian silks, porcelain and various archaeological treasures from the 4th to 20th centuries. Paintings include works by Goya, Velázquez, El Greco, Zurbarán, Murillo, Hieronymus Bosch, Constable, Gainsborough and Reynolds. It's often compared to NYC's Frick.

Open Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm and on Sunday until 3:00 pm. Closed October 12, November 9, December 24, 25 and 31, plus January 1 and 6. Admission is 6€, 3€ for those over 60. Free the first Friday of every month from 5:00 to 9:00 pm and on Sunday from 2:00 to 3:00 pm. Free to children under 12 and all teachers. Metro: Núñez de Balboa.

For a snack or lunch break

After a visit to FLG

If you'd like a quick snack or inexpensive lunch after visiting the Lázaro Galdiano museum, there is a new branch of **La Mucca** nearby at Calle Serrano, 91, serving international fare: pizzas, Pad Thai, curries, steak tartare and risottos. Opens for lunch at 1:00 pm, Monday-Saturday, closed Sundays.

*Museo Arqueológico Nacional (MAN)**

Spain's National Archaeological Museum, at Serrano, 13, just south of Plaza Colón, reopened in 2014 after a complete stem-to-stern, massive six-year renovation project costing 65 million euros, making it one of the most advanced archaeological museums in all of Europe. This 19th century building was brought brilliantly into the 21st century and made accessible to all. All explanations are now in Spanish and English (and Braille), and the HD video screens have subtitles in English. In its refurbishment, the latest technological advancements have been employed to make this visit highly memorable (www.man.es).

It houses items from pre-historic times to the 19th-century; including a reconstruction of the prehistoric cave paintings of Altamira. And it does have a nice café. Plan on at least two hours or even more to do it justice. My favorite piece here is the bust of the Lady of Elche, from the 5th-Century B.C., discovered in 1897 on the grounds of a private estate in Alicante province.

Open Tuesday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 8:00 pm, on Sundays and holidays from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. Open from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm on March 31, May 2, May 15, June 4, December

6 and December 8. Admission is 3€, free on Saturdays after 2:00 pm and Sunday mornings, May 18, October 12, November 16 and December 6.

For a lunch break

Between visits to the FLG and MAN

If you're in need of lunch between the FLG and the MAN, walk east from the MAN on Calle Jorge Juan, the district's "restaurant row", to the corner of Lagasca and Jorge Juan to the Michelin-starred chef Sergi Arola's casual restaurant, **Vi-Cool**. It's very popular with denizens of the neighborhood and Americans who work at the Embassy.

Or head across the street to **Ultramarinos Quintín**, at Jorge Juan, 17, a very stylish bistro, member of the El Paraguas group.

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas

The Decorative Arts Museum can be found on Calle Montalbán, 12, between Plaza Neptuno and Plaza Cibeles, just east of the Palacio de Comunicaciones, the Madrid City Hall. It houses 60,000 objets d'art-textiles, furnishings, ceramics, glass, jewelry and metalwork, displayed in chronological order from medieval and Renaissance to Bourbon Dynasty to 19th-century.

On the 1st floor you'll find the medieval and Renaissance pieces, including Flemish tapestries. On the 2nd floor, there are reproduction rooms of an 18th-century noble home along with Talavera ceramics. On the 3rd floor the pieces come from the Bourbon Dynasty, including porcelains, and 19th-century decorative works are found on the 4th floor, along with a replica of a ceramic tiled Valencian palace kitchen.

Open Tuesday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm, plus Thursday from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, and Sundays/holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Closed Mondays, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31, January 1 and 6. Admission is 3€, free on Sundays, April 18, May 18, October 12, and December 6.

For a lunch break

After a visit to the Decorative Arts Museum

For lunch in this area you're blessed with three alluring alternatives. Across the street in the downstairs bar of the very attractive and highly praised **Restaurante Alabáster**, featuring fine seafood from Galicia, or **Vinoteca García de la Navarra** at Montalbán, 3, or its next door sibling, **Taberna de Pedro**. All have a nice selection of wines by the glass and interesting small plates dining.

Museo Naval (Naval Museum)

At Paseo del Prado, 5, one block south of Plaza de Cibeles, the museum is housed on the first floor of the Spanish Navy Headquarters. If you're a history or naval buff, you might want to visit, but bring your **passport** to pass through security.

The museum displays the bounty accumulated during Spain's maritime expansion, the most important historical pieces owned and procured by the Navy from the period of Ferdinand and Isabella to the present day. This vast collection includes an array of navigational tools, charts, primitive weapons, muskets, guns, coins, paintings of battles and models of ships from the country's earliest days of maritime exploration to the 20th-century. The "boardroom" is a reproduction of a wardroom of a 16th-century frigate and the director's cabin is a reproduction of the cabin room of a ship commander dating from the 19th-century.

One of the museum's treasures is the first known map of the Americas, the Mapa Mundi, drawn by cartographer Juan de la Cosa, made for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1500.

Open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm (closes in August at 3:00 pm). Guided tours are available on Saturdays and Sundays in Spanish (free) at 11:30 am. Closed Mondays, Good Friday, May 15, July 16, October 12, November 9, December 24, 25, 31 and January 1. Admission is a 3€ donation to help with the upkeep of the museum.

*Museo Cerralbo**

Located at Ventura Rodríguez, 17, in the Argüelles district northwest of the Plaza de España, this museum is housed in a 19th-century noble mansion, once belonging to the Marquis de Cerralbo, an obsessive collector of art and objects d'art. He bequeathed this private collection to the Spanish state - paintings, clocks, treasures from the Orient, suits of armor, musical instruments, porcelains, etc.

The house for years has been in need of major renovation and the paintings crying out for major restoration so as to make the Cerralbo a really fine museum, but the Marquis insisted that the collection be displayed "exactly as he had left it". At first glance it doesn't seem quite worthy of one's time when compared to the Lázaro Galiano collection until one reaches the top floor. The gala Dining Room and Ballroom are incredibly lavish-an ode to 19th century opulence. Photography is not permitted.

Open Tuesday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm, plus Thursdays from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Entrance 3€, but is free on Saturday at 2:00 pm, Thursdays from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, and all day Sunday. Close January 1 and 6, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31, and November 9. Admission is 3€.

Metro: From the metro stop on Princesa, go down Calle Ventura Rodríguez to the end. You'll find the museum on your left.

For a lunch break

After a visit to the Cerralbo

A wonderful spot nearby to have lunch is **Dantxari**, at Calle Ventura Rodríguez, 8, serving Basque cuisine in a traditional Basque setting.

Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales

At Plaza de las Descalzas, near Puerta del Sol, you'll find this monastery housed in a palace, the former residence of Emperor Charles V and his wife Isabel of Portugal and where their daughter, Juana, was born in 1535 and is buried in the chapel. When she was left a widow in 1557, Juana founded a convent of Franciscan "blue blooded" nuns.

The splendid Grand Staircase, Flemish tapestries and works by Titian, Bruegel and Zurbarán are more than enough reasons to endure the wait and take the obligatory guided tour. It, along with the Convent of the Encarnación, can be Madrid's most frustrating museum to visit due to the long lines and waits for tours to begin. I suggest that you visit first thing in the morning so as to get in with the first group. Expect a long wait.

Open daily except Monday but with limited hours because it is still a "working" Franciscan convent. Guided tours are given Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and again from 4:00 to 6:00 pm, and on Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Closed on January 1 and 6, Easter Thursday to Sunday, May 1 and 15, November 1 and 9 and December 24, 25 and 31. Admission is 6€, free to children under 5. There is currently no access for disabled persons.

Real Monasterio de la Encarnación

Located north of the Plaza de Oriente on the Plaza de la Encarnación, King Philip III and Empress María de Austria founded this Royal Convent in 1611 as another nunnery for titled women, following the example of the Descalzas Reales, and to this date it remains a working Augustinian convent. It contains important paintings and sculptures from the 17th-18th centuries, including a St. John the Baptist by José Ribera and a polychromed wood statue of Christ by Gregorio Fernández. The final stop on the guided tour, and the most famous, the subterranean El Relicario chamber, is filled with 1,500 relics of saints—their hair, bones, vials of blood, nails, skulls, all displayed in ornate glass containers and cases.

The most famous relic of the ensemble, a tiny flask said to contain the solidified blood of San Pantaleón, a 14th century physician, supposedly miraculously liquefies each year at midnight on the day of his martyrdom, July 27.

Open Tuesday-Saturday for guided tours only from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 4:00 to 6:30 pm, and on Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Closed on Mondays and January 1 and 6, Easter Thursday to Sunday, May 1 and 15, November 1 and 9, December 24, 25 and 31. Admission is 6€.

*La Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida**

The best way to reach this small neo-classical temple at Glorieta San Antonio de la Florida, 5, is to take line 10, or the circular line 6 of the metro to the end, to the Príncipe Pío/Norte stop. You'll go through the Estación del Norte (station no longer used) and up the escalators, over the tracks to the exit Paseo de la Florida. It will be down this Paseo, 500 meters.

San Antonio de la Florida, also known as the Museo y Panteón de Goya, is a chapel/hermitage built in the late 1700's, during the reign of Charles IV, and made famous by the brightly colored frescoes painted by 53-year old (and by then deaf) Francisco de Goya on the hermitage cupola in just four months. The major scene depicts a miracle performed by Saint Anthony of Padua, the saint who is depicted resurrecting a murdered man from the dead so that he can name his murderer and thus absolve St. Anthony's innocent father who had been accused of the crime. It is also Goya's burial site-the artist is interred (headless) above the altar-and this hermitage is considered the "church of the people". The frescoes, widely considered one of Goya's finest works, have been beautifully restored.

On June 13, St. Anthony of Padua's feast day, young madrilenes, along with widows and divorcees, come here with a handful of pins in hand to pray for the saint to send them a suitor. This is a tradition originated by seamstresses. The ladies drop thirteen pins inside the font, they dip their hands into the font, and the number of pins that stick to their hands indicates the number of boyfriends the girls will have that year!

Open Tuesday-Sunday and holidays from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, closed Monday (including holidays) January 1, 6, Mary 1, and December 24, 25, 31. Admission is free.

For a lunch break

After a visit to the chapel/hermitage

For very inexpensive and amusing dining nearby, if you're a rotisserie chicken and cider lover, you might enjoy **Casa Mingo**. Located at Paseo de la Florida, 2, (metro: Norte) Casa Mingo is a bustling, noisy (think German beer hall) and very rustic 1888 Asturian cider house (the oldest in Madrid), built into a stonewall, which is a legend among Madrileños.

Serves only spit roasted whole chicken, chorizo braised in cider, tuna empanadas, Cabrales (blue) cheese, pre-packaged house salad and bottles of cider along with typical Asturian desserts, such as rice pudding, cider cake, milk curd and lemon cream.

Extremely popular on Sundays among the working class families who live in the area, those who want a quick, inexpensive Sunday al fresco dinner and cash poor university students. To find a seat, the unwritten etiquette is to approach a table of patrons about ready to leave and ask if you can have their table when they've finished, then keep hovering until they do. Don't expect a maitre d' to seat you. It's first come, first served, survival of the fittest. Good for those with kids (who like roast chicken), or those on a tight budget. Open daily.

Museo de las Américas

At Avenida de los Reyes Católicos, 6, this museum, celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2016, is often overlooked, but is a must see for anyone interested in Spain's conquest and colonization of the Americas. It's comprised of two floors with over 20,000 items recovered from the Americas including textiles, ceramics, tools, paintings and sculptures. The star of the show is the Quimbayas treasure, a stunning collection of gold objects from the Quimbaya culture, presented to the museum by the Colombian government.

The museum is organized thematically: how America was perceived in Europe from the Age of Discovery until the 18th-century, the reality, the evolution of native societies, religion, and communication between the nations. There is an excellent gift shop and a café in the museum's basement.

Open Tuesday-Saturday from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm, Thursdays until 7:00 pm, and Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Closed Mondays and January 1, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31, plus local holidays. Admission is 3€. Free to those under 18 and over 65. Free for everyone on Sundays, April 18, May 19, October 12 and December 6. Metro: Moncloa

Museo del Traje

An exciting costume museum is in the former home of the Contemporary Art Museum on the Universidad Complutense campus at Avenida Juan de Herrera, 2 (metro: Ciudad Universitaria or Moncloa). It displays a collection of 500 frocks, including regional folk costumes, bullfighting suits and haute couture of Balenciaga, Pertegaz, Paco Rabanne as well as contemporary designers. Free one-hour audio guides are available in English.

Open Tuesday-Saturday, 9:30 am to 7:00 pm and on Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Closed Mondays, January 1, 6, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31. Admission is 3€.

free on Saturday after 2:30 pm and Sundays. Free for those under 18 and over 65. Also free for everyone on April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

The museum also features an elegant gourmet, glass-enclosed restaurant, run by the Lezama group, the **Café del Oriente**, with views of the gardens, delightful outdoor dining in summer and a very accomplished chef, Delia Bautista, who offers two tasting menus, at 48€ and 52€, not including beverages. Restaurant is open on Friday for dinner and Saturday for lunch and dinner.

The bar/cafeteria section of the restaurant serves a great value *menú de trabajo* at lunch and is open from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm and 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on Sundays.

Museo del Ferrocarril de Madrid

Railway Museum

Housed in the no-longer-used rail station, Estación de las Delicias, inaugurated in 1880 by King Alfonso XII and decorated with ironwork by Gustave Eiffel, this is one of the largest railroad collections in Europe. Trains once ran from Delicias to as far as Portugal, but all services were halted in 1968. Here you will see steam locomotives, a sleeping car from the 1920s, station clocks, model trains and tracks. There is even a little café in an elegant vintage 1930 restaurant coach.

Open June-September, Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm and from October-May it's open Monday-Thursday from 9:30 am to 3:00, and on Saturday, Sunday and public holidays it opens at 10:00 am. Closed January 1, 6, December 24, 25 and 31. General admission is 6€ (2,50€ on Sundays), 4€ for seniors 65 and over, children from 4 to 12, and all students, 1€ for persons with disability. Free to children less than 4 years of age, Madrid Card holders and children under 12 on Saturdays.

The Museum, among other activities, offers you the opportunity to travel between Madrid and Aranjuez (42 km) on an authentic vintage train, "Tren de la Fresa", or the Strawberry Train, on Saturdays and Sundays in the spring and fall.

On a weekend you may even be lucky enough to discover both outside and inside the museum the new "Mercado de Motores", a vintage market with stalls selling antiques, used clothing, toys, graphic arts, any number of vintage "treasures" along with live music and a gastronomic space.

Real Fábrica de Tapices

The Royal Tapestry Workshop, at Fuenterrabia, 2, in the heart of Madrid (metro: Menéndez Pelayo), just south of Parque Retiro and the Royal Gardens, close to Atocha station, the

Prado and the Reina Sofía, was originally founded in 1721 by King Felipe V, and like its Parisian counterpart, Gobelins, served to decorate the Royal Court's palaces with tapestries.

Francisco de Goya began his career here creating designs (cartoons) to furnish the palaces of El Pardo and El Escorial and these designs are now displayed at the Prado Museum.

Private visits to the workshop are available Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm (guided tours only). Spanish language tours depart every half hour, with the last tour departing at 1:30 pm. Call ahead to see if an English or French-speaking guide is available: (+34) 914 340 550. Closed from December 24 to January 2.

Palacio de Cibeles

Take a look at the stunningly renovated Cibeles Palace, the former post office and now a free exhibition space, at Plaza Cibeles. Open from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, admission is free. The entrance to this space is through the doors that face Cibeles fountain, where you'll see one Spanish flag above, flanked by two crowns. Security is also tight here, so you must put your belongings through the magnetometer.

In the downstairs space, on the ground floor to the left of the entrance and down the steps, the palace has opened an exhibition space that displays excellent temporary art exhibits from private collections. Hours of these exhibits: Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm. Admission is 6€, 4€ for seniors and students with accreditation. Exhibits are free to all the first Wednesday of the month. Closed Mondays, January 1, 6, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31.

The Mirador Madrid is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10:30 am to 2:00 pm and again from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. Admission is 2€ for adults, 0.50€ for children.

For a lunch break

After a visit to Palacio de Cibeles

The Adolfo Collection of Toledo has opened a stylish cocktail bar, **Terraza Cibeles**, on the top floor. To access the terrace, take the elevator to the left of the entrance. It's open daily from 1:00 pm until 2:00 am, 2:30 am on Fridays and Saturdays, and advertises "the best views in the city". If you'd like to have a drink here in the summer, it's best to reserve a table.

Downstairs (2nd floor) in the Centro-Centro, Adolfo has opened a casual bar/café popular with office workers, **Café Colección Cibeles**, open daily from 10:00 am to midnight that serves a 15€ market menu at lunch, and a six-course tapas menu for €25, without drinks.

The restaurant **Palacio de Cibeles**, also located on the top floor, is open daily for lunch from 1:00 to 4:00, and for dinner from 8:00 pm to midnight, and is currently offering a 49,50€ menu. Reservations required.

Urban Green Spaces

El Retiro Park (Parque del Buen Retiro)

A vast urban oasis with formal gardens, fountains, a lake (*estanque*), play areas, outdoor cafés, puppet theatre and Crystal Palace, an iron and glass edifice built in 1887 to house exotic plants and now used for special (free) art exhibits sponsored by the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

Head straight to the park on a Sunday morning or afternoon and join the promenade and the almost carnival-like atmosphere. There will be joggers, cyclists, roller blade enthusiasts and families out in paddleboats on the Estanque, the man-made lake near the monument to Alfonso XII. There are also band concerts and puppet shows for the children at 1:00 pm on Saturday and at 1:00, 6:00 and 7:00 pm on Sunday. It's open until 10:00 pm during the summer. And despite what one may read on Trip Advisor, the park is safe for walkers and joggers.

Parque Templo Debod

A very nice place to view the sunset, this small park to the north of the Royal Palace area, to the west of Paseo de Pintor Rosales, boasts the Templo de Debod, an authentic 4th-century B.C. Egyptian temple which was donated to Spain as a thank you for its help with the building of the Aswan Dam. The site is open Tuesday-Friday from 9:45 am to 1:45 pm and again from 4:15 to 6:00 pm. Open Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, closed Mondays and holidays. Free.

Sunday Morning Flea Markets

Mercado del Rastro

Europe's largest flea market takes place in the Embajadores district of Old Madrid every Sunday from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm. The old slaughterhouses of this quarter are the origins of today's flea market, which spreads over this neighborhood, in and around the Ribera de Curtidores. The name "Rastro" comes from "*arrastre*", the dragging of dead animal corpses out of the slaughterhouses, and the "Rastro" was the blood trail left behind. Street vendors fill this quarter with various types of bric-a-brac, cheap underwear, t-shirts, bootleg CDs, vinyl, mostly junk, bargains are rare, haggling is expected and pickpockets abound. Not my cup of tea, but if you go please watch your wallet.

Mercado de los Motores

Both outside and inside the Railway Museum, Mercado del Ferrocarril, at Paseo de las Delicias, 61, this is a pop up vintage market with dozens of stalls set up around the carriages and locomotives, selling antiques, used clothing, toys, graphic arts, any number of vintage "treasures" along with live music, a ride for children on a mini choo-choo and a gastronomic space. This flea/vintage market takes place on the second weekend of each month from 11:00 am until 10:00 pm, except during August. Some compare it to London's Camden Market.

Mercado de las Ranas (Frogs Market)

Not actually a flea market but instead an event in the Las Letras quarter-on the first Saturday of each month some 200 shops in this district participate and offer concerts, workshops, story telling for the kids, discounts, complimentary vermouth and tapas, and other enticements to promote shopping in this charming section of Old Madrid.

Self-Guided Tours

Exploring 17th Century Hapsburg Madrid

Plaza Mayor

You can begin a stroll through the Old Madrid of the Hapsburg Dynasty at the Plaza Mayor, Madrid's most famous square, completed in the first quarter of the 17th-century. Over the years it has served as an outdoor meat market, a place for executions, a place where *autos de fé* were held, an outdoor theater, a bullring, and now a lively Sunday stamp and coin market is held from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. There is a store on the square under the arcade, Arco de Cuchilleros, 9, which has contemporary art for sale, all produced by local artisans, and the handy, excellent Madrid Tourist Office is found on the square as well. Do stop by and pick up brochures-there are computers available for visitors to check their email. Do **avoid** the expensive bars and restaurants found on the plaza (and under it) for dining, as the prices are far too high for the quality you'll receive for your euro. Order a drink or coffee if you only want to sit at one of the terraces and survey the scene.

You can follow this, my own little walking tour of *el Madrid de los Austrias*, which is similar to the one the tourist office used to give during the summer, or follow the "Walk Royal Madrid" in the Time Out Guide (45 minutes) and its Walk Literary Madrid (30 minutes).

A Stroll Through "El Madrid de los Austrias"

I suggest that you do this walk in the morning, starting in the Plaza Mayor, which was built in the 15th-century as a market square. Through the centuries bullfights, carnivals, autos de fe were held here. Today it is an important social hub. On Sunday mornings the plaza hosts a stamp and coin market. Here you will find the main Madrid Tourist Office. Walk through the arch on the southwestern side, called the Arco de Cuchilleros, named after the knife makers who practiced their trade here, where you'll find the Cuevas de Luis Candelas restaurant and down the steps to the Calle de Cuchilleros, where on your left you'll pass the oldest restaurant in the world, the legendary Antigua Casa Sobrinos de Botín, then walk on to the next intersection at Puerta Cerrada. At this traffic square, take a left, (saving the lively tapas bar filled Cava Baja for a 9:00 pm stroll), on to Calle Tinteros (changes names to Calle de la Colegiata) to the Plaza de Segovia Nueva, where you'll find the massive High Baroque Cathedral de San Isidro (patron saint of Madrid) on the corner of Toledo, where Tinteros becomes Calle Colegiata. Turn south and stroll down Calle Toledo until you reach the Plaza de la Cebada, once the site of public executions. Turn right here and you'll find yourself in the heart of the La Latina district, where you'll see a large covered market, **el** Mercado de la

Cebada, then continue right on to the Plaza del Humilladero, another square filled with lively terrazas and tapas bars.

If you were to go left, instead of right at the Plaza de la Cebada, you'd find yourself at the Plaza Cascorro and Ribera de Curtadores, the heart of the Sunday morning El Rastro flea market, which operates from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, and draws a very heavy Sunday crowd.

From the Plaza del Humilladero, keep walking to a series of little plazas, the Plaza de San Andrés with its Church of San Andrés and Plaza Carros, then to the Plaza Puerta de Moros, the site of one of four gates to the medieval town or Moorish quarter, then down Carrera de San Francisco to the Basílica San Francisco el Grande at the Plaza de San Francisco, often depicted by Goya (inside you'll find an early work by Goya and apostles by Ribera in the sacristy plus a spectacular dome), then go up, northwest, on Calle San Buenaventura to the Plaza de Gabriel Miró in the Jardines de las Vistillas, where you'll see looming in front of you the Cathedral of the Almudena and Royal Palace straight below.

This is my favorite viewpoint in Madrid, particularly at night. Behind you, find the Calle de la Morería, where you'll see the oldest flamenco *tablaó* (nightclub) in the world, the legendary Corral de la Morería. Then walk back to the major artery Calle Bailén that will take you along the viaduct and to the Royal Palace.

Continue walking north up Calle Bailén past the Almudena Cathedral, where the '04 wedding of Prince Felipe and Letizia took place. Stop and take a guided or self-guided tour of the enormous 18th century Rococo Royal Palace just beyond the Cathedral. Only 50 of the 2,800 rooms can be visited, along with the pharmacy and the Royal Armory, reached via a separate entrance off the courtyard. On the courtyard, on the first Wednesday of each month (except July-September) there is a ceremonial Changing of the Royal Guard at noon.

After your visit save time to stroll through the Campo del Moro Gardens behind the Palace before you leave, then cross Calle Bailén to the Plaza del Oriente to see the Teatro Real, the Royal Opera House facing the Plaza del Oriente.

The Plaza del Oriente is, in my opinion, Madrid's most picturesque squares. From the backside of the Royal Opera House, to the right of Opera metro entrance on Plaza Isabel II, you'll see steps leading up Calle Escalinata Bonetilla that will take you to the major traffic artery, the Calle Mayor, one of the most ancient thoroughfares of the city, where you'll take a right on to Calle Mayor rather than a left up to the Puerta del Sol in order to walk down past the former city hall, Casa de la Villa on pretty Plaza de la Villa, where the city hall once stood. This is Madrid's oldest square, its principal square before the creation of the Plaza Mayor.

For a little detour, turn right down Calle Codo to the Plaza Conde de Miranda and stop at the 17th century Convento de las Carboneras, (Convento del Corpus Cristi), where there is a

small door to the right of the main entrance on Plaza del Conde de Miranda, 3, where the cloistered nuns sell their own baked goods to help support themselves. Ring the bell, a nun will buzz you in and you'll reach a small room with a lazy Susan on the wall, called a *torno*. On the wall next to the lazy Susan is a price list. Ring the buzzer and you'll hear the voice of a nun greet you and ask you what you wish to purchase. Give her your order and when it's ready, the lazy Susan will turn and you'll have your purchases. Place your money on the lazy Susan and turn it around for the nun to retrieve it. If you need change, the nun will put the change on the Susan and turn it back towards you.

Nearby at Calle del Cordón is a shop, El Jardín del Convento, where all the artisanal sweets baked by nuns from various convents all over Spain are sold.

Return to the Plaza de la Villa square, turn around and backtrack towards the Puerta del Sol, Madrid's "Times Square", where thousands of madrileños and visitors have gathered since 1908 for the traditional New Year's Eve countdown of the clock to drink cava and eat their twelve grapes to bring in the New Year.

Before entering the Puerta del Sol, exactly where you came up Escalinata, take a right onto Plaza San Miguel, where another turn-of-the-century, wrought iron covered market, the Mercado de San Miguel, has been transformed into a sophisticated gourmet shopping complex, always buzzing, especially on Sundays before lunch.

Now stroll down the pedestrian Cava San Miguel past the cave-like taverns under the Plaza Mayor, called the *mesones*, on your left, popular with university students and tourists at night. Then walk back up the steps and through the Arco of Cuchilleros (at the Cuevas de Luis Candelas) into the Plaza Mayor. Exit the square on the northeast corner and stroll down Calle Postas to reach Madrid's epicenter, the lively and newly renovated Puerta del Sol.

Palacio Real de Madrid

The vast 18th-century rococo Royal Palace, with 2,800 rooms, is located on the beautiful Plaza del Oriente, across from the Teatro Real. When Napoleon first saw the Grand Staircase after installing his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne in 1808, he supposedly said: "Joseph, your lodgings will be better than mine". It was occupied until 1931, when Alfonso XIII was forced to abdicate and the Republic established, five years before the start of the Spanish Civil War. The current King Juan Carlos and family live in the far more modest Palacio de la Zarzuela outside of the city.

You may wander through on your own or join a guided tour in English. Cost is 10€ on your own, or 14€ with guide. You'll only be allowed to visit fewer than 50 of the 2,800 rooms, including the Throne Room, Ball Room, Hall of Porcelain, the Gasparini Room and the Gala State Dining Room.

Children always enjoy the Royal Armory (Armería Real) with its collection of 2000 weapons and suits of armor. The Royal Pharmacy (Botica Real) is a recreation of a 19th-century pharmacy with beautiful hand painted porcelain pharmacy jars from Talavera de la Reina. The Palace is still used for official functions (visits by heads of state, summits, and various ceremonial occasions, so it closes on short notice.

The Palace and Cammpo de Moro Gardens are open daily, April-September, from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm and until 6:00 pm from October-March. Closed January 1 and 6, May 1 and 15, August 15, October 12, November 9, and December 24, 25 and 31.

Official closing dates change each year, so please check the [Patrimonio Nacional](#) website for this years closing dates.

Admission to the official Royal Rooms, Armory and Royal Pharmacy is 10€, audio guide is 4€. The guided visit is 14€. There is a reduced admission of 5€ for children 5-16, EU students, EU citizens and Latin American passport holders over 65. Free on May 18, October 12, the last two hours Monday-Thursday afternoons for EU citizens and Latin American passport holders, and always free for children 5 and under.

Changing of the Royal Guard

Every Wednesday and Saturday from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm a changing of the Royal Guard (except July, August and September) is held at the Prince's Gate (Puerta del Príncipe), weather permitting. In full-dress uniform, replicas of the ones used during King Alfonso XIII's reign, two foot guards and two mounted guards take their posts outside the Prince's Gate, accompanied by fifes and drums. Foot guards are changed every half hour, while the mounted guards are changed every hour, but not at the same time as the foot guards.

Solemn Changing of the Royal Guard

But at 12:00 noon on the first Wednesday of each month (except July, August and September) a far more elaborate spectacle is celebrated. It's a colorful pageant consisting of a cast of 429 guardsmen, 105 horses, marching bands and carriages. It begins with the setting of the Guard Posts in Armería Square, followed by the inspection of the new guard in Oriente Square. The old guard marches into Armería Square, after which the new guard parades and then also marches into Armería Square. Finally, the old guard marches back to the barracks. This free spectacle lasts for approximately 50 minutes. Bleachers are erected for only 600 spectators, so get there early!

For a coffee or lunch break

After a visit to the Royal Palace, or the spectacle of the Changing of the Royal Guard

Head across Calle Bailén to one of Madrid's most emblematic taverns, the 107-year old **Anciano Rey de los Vinos**. You'll feel like you've stepped back in time surrounded by its marble columns, elegant carved wood doorways, its brass lanterns, beautiful glazed green and white tiles and walls adorned with photographs and paintings of 19th-century Madrid.

Do as the locals and order a canapé and a draught vermouth, and soak up the ambiance. The tavern has a lovely, atmospheric dining room open for lunch and dinner, serving a wide variety of traditional specialties at affordable prices. There's also a small outdoor terrace directly overlooking Almudena Cathedral. The bar and terrace are open from 10:00 am until midnight.

Or if crowds are too thick at the Anciano Rey de los Vinos, try **La Trastienda de las Vistillas**, on the opposite side of Calle Bailén, in the Vistillas Gardens at Travesía de las Vistillas 13. This relatively new spot serves great canapés, boquerones en vinagre, draught vermouth, Mahou beer and wines by the glass. Its outdoor terrace has lovely views of the gardens and of the Plaza Gabriel Miró.

Santiago Bernabéu soccer stadium

This is great fun for fútbol fans young and old alike. Tours are conducted daily except on

December 25, January 1 and game days when tours must end five hours before the match begins. Tours are available Monday-Saturday, 10:00am to 7:00 pm and Sunday and holidays from 10:30 am to 6:30 pm on non-match days. On match days, tours are given until 5 hours before the match. Tickets can be purchased at the stadium ticket window, *taquilla* number 10, next to Gate (*Puerta*) 7 and entrance is located at Tower B on Avenida Concha Espina. Or purchase tickets online at: www.realmadrid.com/en/tickets/bernabeu-tour.

The self-guided tour allows access to the Super Box (*Palco de Honor*), the locker rooms, the trophy and museum rooms, opportunity for a drink at the bar, access to the field via the players' tunnel and finishes up, of course, in the official Real Madrid store. Tickets are 19€ for adults and 13€ for children up to age 14.

Visitors can reach the stadium by taking the metro line 10 to the Santiago Bernabéu station, or for a very scenic tour of modern Madrid, take bus 27 from the stop at the Plaza de Cibeles, where you'll find the Palacio de Cibeles and get off at Plaza Cuzco, where you will see the stadium on your right (beware of pickpockets on both the bus and metro).

For a lunch break after touring the stadium

The **Real Café Bernabeu** offers a sushi bar downstairs and serves a low cost weekday *menú cuchara exprés* for 9,90€ or the *menú madrista* for 18€, if you and your family need

quick and easy sustenance after the tour. The elegant Cibeles bar of the **Puerta 57 Restaurant**, within the stadium (entrance through door 57), is a great place for very traditional tapas from the Asturias region. Prices are a bit inflated but it makes for great people watching. And it does serve an outstanding *tortilla española* and *ensaladilla rusa*. Inside the stadium there is an Asian restaurant, **Zen Market**, entry through gate 20, open daily for lunch from 1:30 pm to 4:30. **Asador de la Esquina**, entry through gate 46, has a terrace for summer dining. Open for lunch daily from 1:00 pm to 4:00.

Plaza Monumental de las Ventas del Espíritu Santo

The bullfighting season in Madrid runs from late March to mid-October, with the highlights being the **San Isidro Fair** (May 9-June 8) and the Feria de Otoño, the October Fair. Bullfights are held each Sunday during the season at the Plaza de toros de las Ventas, which is Spain's largest bullring, holding 22,000 spectators. Tickets go on sale at the bullring a few days prior to the scheduled corrida (bullfight). If you're interested in seeing a bullfight, purchase a *sombra* (shade) ticket rather than the cheaper *sol* (sun) or *sol y sombra* (sun and shade) tickets for a comfortable late afternoon, as you can only sit comfortably in the sun in early May and mid-October. Be sure to rent a *almohadilla*, a leather cushion, to sit on, as the seats are concrete. Your seat will be marked by a number on the concrete, and will be a very tight space at that!

The priciest seats are the *barrera*, *contrabarrera* and *delantera*, the first four rows of seating, followed by the *tendido bajo* seats. Avoid the *andanada*, the nosebleed section. Bullfight tickets can be purchased online when they become available through: www.las-ventas.com.

To reach the Las Ventas bullring by public transportation, take the metro, line 2, and get off at the Ventas stop. The bullring's **museum** is located next to the *patio de caballos* in the back, and admission is free, and it's open from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm.

Standard self-guided tours are available from 10:00 am to 6:30 pm daily, except December 25 and January 1. Purchase your tickets, which include the audio guide, at the gift shop at the Cuadrillas gate. Open on Sundays, March through mid-October from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, 4 hours before the bullfights begin. Tour tickets are 14€ for adults, 8€ for children under twelve, and free to children under 5.

Guided Tours

Madrid-Museum-Tours*

For escorted art tours, this well-regarded company offers high quality, personalized, private tours of Madrid's museums and monuments with officially licensed guides. Madrid-Museum-Tours specializes in Art History and includes in its offerings a full Prado Museum Tour along with a special two-hour “*Jewish Heritage of the Prado*” tour with Nacho Benjumea, author of *Mystery of Las Meninas*, in addition to an 8-hour tour of the big three art museums + Royal Palace. They also offer a private visit to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, one of Madrid's lesser-known jewels, a tour of Madrid's most fascinating Monasteries, the Descalzas Reales and Encarnación, where the regular guided tours are usually only given in Spanish.

Full-day chauffeured excursions lasting up to nine hours, are available to El Escorial/Valley of the Fallen, Toledo and Segovia/Avila. And for those who wish to combine wine and art, M-M-T offers a full-day tour by car to the countryside. Participants will first visit the beautiful Bourbon dynasty Royal Palace of Aranjuez, followed by a stroll through its lavish gardens, then move on to the rural village of Colmenar de Oreja where they will visit a highly regarded family-run winery for a tour and tasting, then on to lunch in the charming, atmospheric town of Chinchón with its balconied, oval square where bullfights are still held and *anís* (anisette) still produced. The final stop on this excursion is to the UNESCO World Heritage City of Alcalá de Henares, birthplace of Cervantes and the “stork capital” of Spain.

M-M-T also offers private tapas and wine tours in Rural Madrid.

While prices do run steep for any privately escorted tours with a licensed guide, they are a small luxury that can make Madrid's artistic treasures come alive for the visitor and provide lasting memories.

Mr. Hernan Amaya Satt and his colleagues are an especially kind, thoughtful and talented bunch. Our clients have been in very good hands with M-M-T. Rick Steves recommends them as well, and you can read testimonials from clients on his Graffiti Wall.

Madrid Cool and Cultural*

A Madrid native, Gemma García, passionate about her city, offers very well regarded tours, focusing on both food and culture, in and around the city, museum tours, Sephardic tours, exclusive gastro tours (she knows the very best places), cooking classes in a small professional kitchen preceded by a market tour, wine tastings, private flamenco classes,

luxury art experiences, etc. Gemma also arranges to Toledo and Segovia with a team of licensed, professional guides.

Hop on/Hop off Bus

You might like to take the Madrid City Tour red double-decker bus around its Historic Madrid circuit as a short orientation to the city on day one, but don't depend on the English commentary as your definitive city guide. You can catch it at Gran Vía, 32, at the Plaza de España, the Puerta del Sol, in front of the Wax Museum on Calle Recoletos, the Hard Rock Café on the Plaza Colón, in front of the Botanical Gardens, above the Prado near the Hotel Ritz and at the Royal Palace. Headphones are available with commentary in 14 languages. Hop on and off as you please.

The bus runs two main routes: Route 1 (blue), Historic Madrid - 80 minutes, and Route 2 (green), Modern Madrid - 65 minutes. There is also a Night Route during the summer, Route 1, but without stops. Buses pass by every 8 to 15 minutes depending on the season. Tickets are available for one day or two consecutive days. See the web for current schedule and pricing. Madrid City Tour offers a discount for kids 7-16 and seniors over 65. Free for children under 7.

There are no restrooms and soft drinks are not sold on the bus. You can download the free mobile app through iTunes or Google Play.

Organized Bus Tours for Day Excursions

Several bus companies offer organized excursions from Madrid to Toledo, El Escorial and the Valley of the Fallen (Valle de los Caídos), Avila and Segovia. You'll see brochures for Julià/Viator Tours, Gray Line/Trapsatur, and Pullman at your hotel. These excursions can seem quite "canned" and always include lengthy stopping at souvenir shops. Some include lunch, which I would definitely skip and go on my own. You can book one of these tours online or with your hotel, usually not more than a day in advance, and all are offered daily except those that include El Escorial (the Monastery of El Escorial is closed on Mondays).

Here are some of the current excursion offerings from the industry leader, Trapsatur (Spanish only). From the web page you can download their current brochure with prices.

- *Avila and Segovia - Full day (9 hrs), with lunch: menu turistico, gastronomico or tapas.*
- *El Escorial and Valle de los Caídos - Half day (5 hrs), except Monday.*
- *Toledo - Half day (5 hrs) and full day (8 hrs), with or without lunch.*
- *El Escorial, Valle de los Caídos and Toledo - Full day (11 hrs), except on Mondays.*

Here are the current excursion offerings one can book from the wholesaler, **Viator**, if you really must!

- *Avila and Segovia - Full day (9 hrs), lunch not included.*
- *Avila and Salamanca - Full day (9 hrs), with tourist or gastronomic lunch options.*
- *El Escorial, Valle de los Caídos and Toledo - Full day (11 hrs), except Monday.*
- *El Escorial, Valle de los Caídos - Half day (5 hrs), except Monday.*
- *Toledo - Half or full day, (5 and 8hrs), with tourist or 'typical' lunch.*
- *Toledo and Segovia - Full day (10 hrs) without lunch.*
- *El Escorial and Aranjuez Royal Palace - Full day (9 hrs)*
- *Pedraza and Segovia small group tour with tapas and wine, optional lunch (9 hrs).*
- *Toledo small group tour with wine tasting and optional lunch (8 hrs).*
- *Ribera del Duero Wine Day Tour - Full day (10 to 11 hrs). Lunch not included.*

Gourmet Food & Wine Tours

Gourmet Madrid

Get off the beaten tourist trail with a gourmet tapas experience, run by natives, in the Retiro district, which is blessed with the very best creative tapas bars/small plates restaurants in the city. This tour is called the “Creative Tapas Tour” and it runs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The lunch tapas tour in the Retiro starts at 1:00 pm and will last around 2-1/2 hours. Meeting point is at the Ibiza metro station exit (Line 9), on Calle Ibiza, and costs 90€/person.

Note: the gourmet gastrobars in the Retiro are jam packed with savvy locals at night, making it very difficult to conduct a tour there in the evening.

The evening tapas tour takes place in Old Madrid, Sunday-Thursday, from 7:30 to 10:30 pm, with the meeting point at the Plaza Santa Ana in front of the bronze statue of Lorca, which is in front of the theater, *Teatro Español*. Cost is 70€/person.

This company also offers wine tours to wineries in the Madrid province and an all day wine touring program to the Ribera del Duero, as well as bilingual cooking classes conducted by a chef, beginning with a tour of the prestigious La Paz Market, Madrid’s most exclusive, in the tony Salamanca district.

Madrid Tours and Tastings

Owner Nygil Murrell, who has conducted tours for travel guru Rick Steves, leads Gastronomic Tapas Tours, stopping at 3-4 different tapas bars in central Madrid. His most popular tour is the 3-1/2 hour, Neighborhood of Letters Tour, through the *Barrio de las Letras*, and costs 95€/person, including guide services, food and drink. A maximum of 6 participants insures a personalized experience. This tour is offered for both lunch and dinner. Meeting point is Plaza Santa Ana.

He also offers a Vegetarian Tapas Tour through the veggie/vegan friendly district of Malasaña.

As Nygil is a certified sommelier, he also offers an all day wine excursion to the prestigious Ribera del Duero appellation with a maximum of six participants. Can also be arranged as a private tour.

Adventurous Appetites

Yet another expat company offering a guided evening tapas tour of Old Madrid daily (except Sunday), lasting about 4 hours. Tour begins at 8:00 pm from the famous *Oso y Madroño* statue, the bear leaning on a strawberry tree, in the Puerta del Sol. Groups are limited to 8 participants except during periods of heavy demand. Cost is 50€, which includes the first drink and tapa, and it's "pay-as-you-go" after the first *aperitivo*.

Devour Madrid Food Tour

A new company run by food bloggers and passionate foodie expats, it's garnering rave reviews for its tours, both day and evening. Their 75€/person (65€ for teenagers) Huertas neighborhood food and market tour, offered Monday-Saturday, departs from the Plaza Santa Ana at 10:15 am and lasts for around 3-1/2 hours.

The Wine Bus

This tour allows tourists to enjoy a visit to an attractive winery outside of the city, in the Madrid, Toledo or Ribera del Duero appellations, without needing to drive. On Saturdays, the bus leaves from the Claridge Hotel, Plaza del Conde de Casal, 6, at 9:30 am (depending on the destination) and returns to the city at around 8:00 pm.

The trip includes a two-hour visit to an area winery, such as *Pago de los Capellanes* or *Comenge* in Ribera del Duero, followed by a tasting and lunch, and an afternoon cultural activity, such as a visit to the famous windmills of Consuegra in La Mancha, the aqueduct in Segovia, the walled city of Avila, or the castle in Peñafiel.

In the intense heat of July and August the schedule changes with departures at around 4:00 pm (or earlier) and returns to the city late at night, at 1:30 am or a bit later if the program includes the Concierto de las Velas in Pedraza.

Cooking Classes

Cooking Point

Located in the Barrio de las Letras (Huertas) district at Calle Moratín, 11, 200 meters from Antón Martín market, receives solid reviews from participants. Owner and teacher Eduardo offers hands-on, 4-hour tapas cooking classes, paella-making classes and wine tasting classes in English from Monday through Saturday for up to 24 people.

The tapas classes run from 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm while the paella classes take place from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and include a visit to the atmospheric Antón Martín covered market nearby. The cost is 70€ for adults and 35€ for children ages 5-12. The cost includes instruction, recipe booklet, drinks and dinner. The wine tasting sessions are held upon request (minimum of 8 people) and cost 45€/person.

Tel: (+34) 910 115 154

Day Spas - Health Clubs - Pools

*Hammam Al Ándalus**

At Calle Atocha, 14, in Old Madrid, Hammam Al Ándalus Madrid (Baños árabes), a member of the *Grupo Ándalus*, with Hammams in Córdoba, Granada and Málaga, offers bath, massages and aromatherapy by advanced reservation only. Spa times are every two hours beginning at 10:00 in the morning, with the last one reservation available at 10:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 914 299 020

Chi Spa Madrid

Conde de Aranda, 14, in the Salamanca district, is one of the city's most exclusive luxury day spas (has as a sister spa in Barcelona). It offers hair treatments, facials, body massages, waxing, manicures and pedicures. Open Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm, closes on Saturdays and Sundays at 6:00 pm.

Tel: (+34) 915 781 340

Le Max Wellness Club - Spa by Clarins

You'll find this spa inside the 5-star Hotel Wellington at Velázquez, 8, in the Salamanca quarter. It offers both fitness and a spa.

The Spa by Natura Bissé

The newest hotel spa in town is found inside the 5-star Hotel Urso at Calle de Mejía Lequerica, 8, in the trendy Tribunal neighborhood.

Tel: (+34) 914 444 458

The Guardian proclaims: *“The Natura Bissé spa at the Urso is everything an urban spa should be, with no fussy nonsense. Wood walls and floors create a cossetting vibe. You need a lot of energy in Madrid so pep yourself up with a citrus scrub or a bitter orange mask. For something really special, try the magnetic mud treatment with diamond dust. Lolling in the seven-meter hydro massage pool feels good after shopping, while the sauna comes in handy for a quick detox the morning after the night before.”*

Fusiom

This Asian spa at Calle Alcalá, 44, across the avenue from Palacio de Cibeles, specializes in Thai, Balinese and Hawaiian massages. Also offers an exotic array of beauty treatments,

such as a coffee scrub or pineapple body wrap. Towels, slippers, bath tunics, cotton pajamas provided.

Public pools

The city hall opens the Olympic-sized public municipal outdoor pool, Piscinas Canal Isabel II, usually on May 30 and closes it the first week of September. It's located at Avenida Filipinas, 54. Metro: Canal. Opening daily 8:00 am to 10:00 pm. It is part of the Centro Deportivo Municipal de Isabel II that also includes tennis courts.

Hotel pools - open to non-guests

The rooftop pool of the Hotel Emperador, Gran Via, 53, is open to non-hotel customers and can be accessed Monday-Friday for 35€/person, and weekends and holidays for 48€. Not only can one enjoy the pool, but also the lounge chairs, chill out cocktail bar and use the free Wi-Fi. Open May-September from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm.

Hairdressers

All in the Salamanca district

- Alberto Cerdán (AC), Ortega y Gasset, 21. A catalán stylist who has styled the hair of tennis star Arantza Sánchez Vicario plus designed the wedding coif for the (ex) daughter-in-law of the Duchess of Alba.
- Oliver Martínez, Castelló, 33. Hairdresser to model Ariadne Artiles.
- Lorena Morote, Velázquez, 69. Hairdresser to Spanish actresses.
- Moncho Moreno, Lagasca, 3. Has counted Queen Noor of Jordan as one of his clients.
- Salón Cheska, Velázquez, 61.
- Ines Estebanez, Velázquez, 100.
- Angela Navarro, Ayala, 26.
- Rizos, a dependable chain, with its Beauty Boutique at Velázquez, 76.

The Four Most Popular Day Excursions

Toledo

From Puerta de Atocha station, take the new high speed AVANT (a regional AVE), a 30-minute ride for the bargain price of 20,60€ round trip. Check the current schedule at Renfe.com. Please make sure to purchase your ticket at least a few days in advance, or better still, online on the RENFE website, at Petrabax.

Tickets for the morning departures from Madrid often sell out, and you will be sorely disappointed if you wait until the morning of your trip to purchase tickets. For our last Toledo visit all morning trains were sold out upon our arrival at 9:00 am at Atocha station, but luckily we had purchased our tickets and printed them online. There is only one class of service on the AVANT trains.

For a full day tour we suggest that you depart on the Avant 08292 train at 9:20 am to reach the city slightly before monuments open at 10:00 am and that you return on the Avant 08173 at 5:25 pm. Or if you are a more avid sightseer with a keen interest in history and great art, you might even want to return later, at 6:25 pm on the Avant 08183. From the Toledo station, a beautiful Neo-mudéjar structure, the city bus 5 or 6 (fare: 1,40€) or taxi (4,50€) will take you up through the Puerta de Bisagra gate to the Plaza de Zocodover, the main square and heart of this World Heritage City, to start your tour.

Toledo has been proclaimed Spain's Gourmet Capital for 2016 and boasts a new covered market/gourmet food court, **Mercado de San Agustín**, near the main square, Plaza Zocodover.

Please refer to Maribel's Toledo City Guide for additional information on monuments, museums, shopping, dining and accommodations.

Segovia

A high-speed rail line from Madrid to Segovia was inaugurated December, '07, making this very quick rail journey of around 30 minutes the very best way now to reach this lovely city. (See my separate Segovia file for detailed information regarding your visit, dining and an overnight stay.) These trains depart from the Madrid's **Chamartín** rail station, in the northern section of the city rather than from Atocha station from where the high speed AVE trains to Barcelona, Valencia, Córdoba, Sevilla, Granada (coming soon) and Málaga depart.

There are several different types of high speed trains on this route: the Avant, which travels between Madrid and Segovia (identical to the Madrid-Toledo Avant), and the Intercity and

Alvia which continue to northern cities and offer two classes of service, tourist and business (*preferente*). The least expensive train (and most practical for tourists) is the Avant with a flat round trip fare of €20,60, like its Toledo cousin. The ride on the Avant is as smooth, comfortable and quick as the other trains, so if the Avant train schedule suits you, take it and save some euros.

I suggest that you depart on the 9:55 am Avant 08109 and return on the Avant 08158 at 4:07 pm or the 08188 at 6:15 pm.

Note: Although quick and very comfortable, you're not afforded beautiful scenery on this rail journey, as most of the journey is spent passing through three long tunnels.

You can see the schedule and then purchase your tickets and print them at www.renfe.com but when checking the schedule, make sure to select as your destination Segovia-**AVE** rather than Segovia, as the high speed trains go to the new Ave Guiomar station. There are still slow (2 hr.) Regional trains that run to Segovia's in-town station. See the Trip Advisor tutorial on how to purchase train tickets online at www.tripadvisor.com.

Again, you will arrive at the new **Segovia-Guiomar** AVE station, which has been built in a field, "in the middle of nowhere", four kilometers outside the city. You will find city bus 11 waiting for you. Take it (fare: 1,03€), and the bus will drop you off directly in front of the aqueduct. Before you leave the station, note the bus schedule for your return, or print a copy from here: www.urbanosdesegovia.com/index2.htm. At the top click on *Mapas de Líneas y Horarios*, then select línea 11.

The bus ride from station to aqueduct takes 15-20 minutes. Taxi fare runs about 8€. Once at the aqueduct square, your first stop should be at the handy Tourist Office to pick up a map, brochures, business cards of area restaurants, etc. For online tourist information see: www.turismodesegovia.com.

Please refer to Maribel's Segovia Guide for additional information on monuments, museums, shopping, dining and accommodations.

El Escorial

The Cercanías commuter train C3, a double-decker, leaves from Chamartín station for the 53-minute trip. Fare runs 5,50€ one-way. I take the 8:52 am run, arriving at El Escorial at 9:44 am, before the Monastery opens at 10:00 am and before the tour groups descend. Upon exiting the train station in the lower town (town has two parts, the train station below and the Monastery is in upper village), immediately get on the awaiting Herranz line 1 city bus (fare: 1,50€) that will take you up the two kilometer long hill to the upper town, where you'll

get off at the bus station, which is at the end of Florida Blanca street, and you'll see the Monastery looming ahead of you on the left.

Or to reach El Escorial by bus...

Autocares Herranz bus 661 to San Lorenzo de El Escorial departs starting at 6:55 am, Monday-Friday, and 8:00 am on Saturday, Sunday and holidays from dock 3 at the Intercambiador de Autobuses at the Moncloa metro stop-grey circular line 6. The ride takes 55 minutes and drops you off at the bus station in the upper town from where you can easily walk over to the Monastery. Seats are assigned. You can take the 9:15 am weekday departure, Saturday at 8:00 am, or Sunday at 8:45 am, to arrive before the hordes of tour buses. The one-way fare is 4,20€.

The monastery is open October-March from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, and April-September from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm. Closed on Mondays plus December 24, 25 and 31. For info about the town and the monastery: www.sanlorenzoturismo.org

You can take a large group guided tour, but the guides' English can often be difficult to understand. Or you can wander on your own. Admission costs 10€, 5€ for those under 16 and EU seniors over 65). A guided tour costs an additional €4, as does the audio guide.

If you're a history buff, be sure to see Philip's Royal Apartments, the majestic Royal Pantheon and the Library. If you're an art lover, the Museo de Arte displays works of Tintoretto, Titian, el Greco, Zurburán, Velázquez and Murillo. The Cathedral is free, as are the gardens. If you visit independently you can pick and choose according to your interests. After your visit, stroll over to the pretty little town and have a snack or early lunch at one of the outdoor cafés on Calle Floridablanca. The Miranda y Suizo is an Old World type place and has nice sandwiches or full meals. But the Parrilla Príncipe is even better for a relaxing full gourmet lunch on the terrace.

You'll find El Escorial packed in July when the Universidad Complutense holds its popular summer program there with seminars that draw distinguished scholars and famous names from around the world.

To return from El Escorial, take the Herranz city bus, line 1, back from the bus station down the hill to the commuter train station. Bus departs about 15 minutes ahead of time so as to get you to the station to catch the train back. Just take your printout of the train schedule from renfe.com or if you forget, just ask for one at the ticket window.

Ávila

There are a dozen departures from the Chamartín station to Avila everyday. Most of the trains are the new and modern MD trains, which make the trip in 90 minutes. After a

leisurely lunch you could return on the 4:00 or 5:00 pm MD. Check [Renfe](#) for the current schedule. The round trip fare is 19,60€. Take a taxi or a blue city bus (fare: 1€) to the entrance of the walled city from the train station, which lies about a mile away.

For information on visiting the walls of Ávila see: muralladeavila.com/en/plan-your-visit/route-around-the-walls. You can download the Ávila Tourism App from the iTunes store or Google Play (in English and Spanish only).

If your hotel sits close to Atocha, Recoletos, or Nuevos Ministerios, you can take the underground *Cercanías* suburban train (fare: 1,70€) that runs every 3 to 4 minutes between Atocha and Chamartín stations. The ride takes about 13 minutes, making intermediate stops at Recoletos and Nuevos Ministerios. You can also reach Chamartín rail station in just 9 minutes by catching a Sol-Chamartín *Cercanías* train from the underground suburban transportation hub in the Puerta del Sol.

Autocares Jiménez Dorado now provides daily excursions to Avila departing from Calle Mayor, 47, at 9:45 am, Plaza Cánovas del Castillo (Neptuno) at 10:10 am, and Estación Sur de Autobuses (metro-Méndez Alvaro) at 10:30 am, returning from the Ávila Visitor Center at 4:30 pm. The ride takes around 1 hour 40 minutes unless your trip coincides with the beginning or end of a bank holiday, resulting in traffic jams leaving or returning to the city. Round trip fare: 31,50€, and can be purchased on line at: www.busvision.net/package/excursion-avila/.

Other Day-Trip Possibilities

Sigüenza

On weekends, Madrid denizens venture to lovely, “off the beaten path”, Sigüenza, the pink sandstone village 133 kilometers northeast of Madrid in the Guadalajara province. If you venture here too, you should go on a Saturday or Sunday, when the town is far livelier as it returns to its very somnolent state during the week. Visitors travel here to see its medieval castle, now a government-run Parador, to stroll down the atmospheric, cobble stoned Calle Mayor, lined with fine rose colored stone mansions and a few artisan shops and to tour the vast, fortified Romanesque Cathedral filled with treasures, including the beautiful alabaster tomb of El Doncel, Queen Isabella’s page. On July 8-10 the town holds a lively medieval fair.

Take the Regional express train from Chamartín station. There are currently five departures per day during the week and on Sundays, but only four departures on Saturdays. The trip takes less than two hours, depending on which train you choose. On Saturdays there is a morning Regional Express train departing at 8:14 am, arriving at 9:44 am and an afternoon return on the Express at 4:12 pm, arriving back in Madrid at 6:07 pm. The Regional Express train fare is 10,90€/each way, while the Regional is 9,50€/each way.

Renfe has inaugurated a special spring (April 9-June 4) and fall (September 17-November 5) seasonal full-day medieval train ride/excursion, El Tren Medieval de Sigüenza, offering typical Alcarrian sweet treats during the ride, entertainment by costumed troubadours and a guided tour of the city (in Spanish), ending at a medieval market, plus dining discounts at select local restaurants. The Medieval train departs from Madrid’s Chamartín station Saturdays at 10:05 am, returning from Sigüenza at 7:40 pm, arriving back in Madrid at 9:06 pm.

See [Tren Medieval 2016](#) for details on this year’s program and prices. On the English page, click on “Offers and Promotions” for more information about the Medieval Train and other seasonal Culture Trains, such as the Aranjuez Strawberry train and the Alcalá de Henares Cervantes train. Cost of the medieval train excursion is 30€ for adults, 16€ for children from 3 to 16 years of age.

If you wish to spend the night at the 12th-century [Castle-Parador](#), a former Arab fortress, splurge for one of its superior rooms with canopy bed. Promotional rates (Amigos, Golden Age, Young Person’s, Five Night Plan) here are quite reasonable. But do not overnight on a weekday when this lovely town is as dead as a doornail.

Lunch in Sigüenza

For dining, the top table in town is **El Doncel Hotel Restaurante** (2 Repsol stars). It's housed in a lovely 18th-century noble home at Paseo de la Alameda, 3, and offers a vegetarian menu. Reservations highly recommended. Closed Sunday evenings and Monday.

Tel: (+34) 949 390 001

Aranjuez

The Spanish Versailles

The main draw of Aranjuez, other than its sublime asparagus and strawberries, is a visit to its elegant pink stone Royal Palace, designed originally as a hunting lodge for King Charles in 1560. Destroyed by fire, it was rebuilt as a palace in the mid 1700s for Philip V of the Bourbon dynasty to serve as the king's spring residence. It's often called the Spanish Versailles, as it emulates some of the splendor of the French Versailles with its over-the-top Rococo style, and boasts beautiful and extensive gardens, el Jardín del Príncipe.

Within the gardens one can visit the Casa del Labrador, built for King Charles IV, a model of the Petit Trianon. It houses a collection of antique clocks. Visits to both the Place and the Casa del Labrador are by guided tour only. The tour lasts 40 minutes and cost 5€.

The Royal Palace is open Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm during the winter months, and until 8:00 pm during the summer. The guided tour lasts 40 minutes and cost 5€.

You can reach Aranjuez using the C-3 Cercanías commuter train departing Atocha station daily, but with reduced service on weekends. Check renfe.com and select your departure station: MADRID - ATOCHA CERCANIAS. The trip takes between 31 and 38 minutes, depending on your departure time. The round-trip ticket is 4,85€ each way.

For full day thematic excursion to Aranjuez, there is the special 19th century steam engine, inaugurated by Queen Isabel II in 1851, El Tren de la Fresa, the "Strawberry Train", which departs from the National Railway Museum, *Museo del Ferrocarril de Madrid*, at Paseo de las Delicias, 61, on Saturdays and Sundays at 10:00 am in the spring and fall. The ride includes a degustation of the famed Aranjuez strawberries served by costumed attendants on route, tour bus to and from the 18th-century Bourbon Royal Palace, a guided visit to the Palace (in Spanish only). Lunch is on your own.

The trip takes one hour each way and cost 30€ for adults, 15€ for children (4-12), or you can book a cabin for up to 8 people for 98€. Tickets are available at the Atocha ticket office, local travel agencies, or by calling Renfe at: (+34) 920 320 320. Check the museum's website for

this year's dates. Note: The train does not have a/c and if the steam locomotive breaks down, they substitute an electric engine, and few non-Spanish speaking visitors seem to take it.

Lunch in Aranjuez

Casa José at Calle Abastos, 32, across the street from the market, is widely considered the city's finest table. Its chef, Fernando del Cerro, excels in the exquisite preparation of fresh vegetables for which Aranjuez is famous. Offers a "Menu Express" for 35€, while the Vegetable Classics menu is priced at 75€ (www.casajose.es).

Tel: (+34) 918 911 488 / 918 920 204

Alcalá de Henares

A UNESCO World Heritage Site

Called *Complutum* by the Romans who conquered the area in the 1st-century AD, its current name comes from its Moorish legacy, *Al-Kala-en-Nahr* (the castle). During the Golden Age, Alcalá rivaled Salamanca as an illustrious seat of higher learning, and the Golden Age playwrights; Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina and Calderón de la Barca, studied here, along with Ignacio de Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. Cardinal Cisneros, head of the Spanish church, grand inquisitor and confessor to Queen Isabel, founded the university in 1498. Note the swan motifs in the University patios, a symbol of its patron, Cisneros (*cisne* - swan).

Alcalá was also the birthplace of **Cervantes**, the author of don Quijote, who was born in 1547, the fourth son of a local surgeon. On the arcaded Calle Mayor, number 48, the site of his natal home, a museum has been built in his honor, in the style of a typical 16th-century dwelling, the House-Museum of Cervantes. Although this is a reconstruction, as is the House-Museum of El Greco in Toledo, it has been decorated in the style of a typical 16th-century dwelling. This year commemorates the 400th anniversary of Cervantes' death (400cervantes.es). He died the same year as Shakespeare, 1616.

The plane tree lined Plaza de Cervantes, with its monument to the dramatist, and a bandstand, is the center of the Alcalá's Old Quarter. On the square one can visit the Corral de Comedias, which in the 1600s, a time when plays were staged in the open-air courtyard, and a rival to Shakespeare's Old Globe Theater, is the oldest remaining active public theater in Europe. The theater has been lovingly restored and offers a continuous cycle of plays, dance performances and concerts.

Another site worth visiting is the archbishop's palace, the Palacio Arzobispal de Alcalá de Henares, where Columbus implored Queen Isabella to finance his voyage of discovery. The palace, which dates from the 13th-century, is a mix of Moorish, Renaissance and Baroque styles, and worthy of a visit.

The splendid plateresque façade of the surviving original university building, the Colegio de San Idelfonso, is a creation of *Gil de Hontañón*, and one of the great masterpieces of the Spanish Renaissance. This style is labeled plateresque (*plata* - silver) because it resembles the fine, delicate work of a silversmith. The elaborately carved marble sarcophagus of the Cardinal can be found in the university's chapel. In 1836 the main university was transferred to Madrid, and as a result, Alcalá, as a center of learning, lost much of its status.

The town itself has now become a burgeoning working class suburb of Madrid, and one needs to inch past the very unpromising, modern housing blocks to reach its inner core so as to enjoy its charms and to gaze at the real symbols of the town now: the multitudinous stork nests that cover the rooftops. For more information about the city see: www.ayto-alcaladehenares.es.

Best time to visit: October during the annual Semana Cervantina, which commemorates Cervantes' birth on October 9, 1547, but as this year marks the 400th anniversary of his death, there are events throughout the year.

To reach Alcalá, take the Cercanías train C2, C7, C8A or C8B from Atocha station. Trains depart every 15-20 minutes. The ride takes 35 minutes and it's about a 10-minute walk from the Alcalá station to the town center.

This year, on Saturdays from April through July and September to the first Saturday in December, the Tren de Cervantes, one of Renfe's Cultural Trains-similar to the seasonal Strawberry train to Aranjuez and Medieval train to Sigüenza, will take you from Atocha station to Alcalá, with costumed attendants performing excerpts from Cervantes' plays. Included in the cost of the roundtrip fare of 22€ for adults, 16€ for children 4-11, are a guided tour of the major city monuments and visit to the house where the playwright/novelist was born. This special thematic train departs Atocha station at 11:05 am. Tickets can be purchased online at Renfe.com, or at Atocha station.

Lunch in Alcalá

If you do decide to visit, please make sure to seek out the **Hostería del Estudiante** for lunch, an excellent and atmospheric restaurant housed in the 16th-century Colegio de San Jerónimo, at Calle de los Colegios, 3, run by the strikingly avant-garde Parador across the street. End your meal with a local treat, the *costrada*, an almonds and puff pastry dessert.

Tel: (+34) 918 880 330

Chinchón

Located 45 kilometers southeast of the capital, Chinchón is a delightfully atmospheric, highly picturesque small medieval town with a famous porticoed, oval-shaped Plaza Mayor where

bullfights, and even *encierros*, are still held in summer. The Plaza is lined with white houses set on double and triple tiers of wooden galleries painted a dark green and plentiful taverns or *mesones* offering the traditional Castilian garlic soup and roast lamb. This lovely town also sports one beautiful bakery, hidden off the square, that sells elaborately designed, braided breads-true works of art. To find it follow the Fábrica de Pan sign on the square, down an alley. This is also an anisette-making town. You'll pass the alcoholera/distillery, anís de Chinchón, as you drive in.

And Chinchón is THE place to visit on Easter Saturday at nightfall when the citizens present their Passion Play, a reenactment of the Last Supper, the Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Via Crucis and the crucifixion, descent from the cross, burial and resurrection. This event has been declared of National Tourist Merit. Two hundred townsfolk participate in retelling the story, presented with full light and sound effects.

The local fiestas take place on July 25, fiesta de Santiago and the fiesta de San Roque are in mid-August. Its Plaza Mayor has been featured in many films and bullfights have been held here since 1502. During Spain's Golden Age, the townsfolk watched the plays of Lope de Vega performed in the square.

Chinchón has that special "stage set" look (as does Pedraza) that has attracted filmmakers over the years. Orson Wells filmed scenes from his *Chimes at Midnight* in the plaza. Chinchón also offers a castle in ruins on the hill, the Church of the Assumption above the square with a painting of the Assumption by Goya, whose brother served as a priest here in the village.

If you'd like to spend the night, as in Sigüenza, Avila and Aranjuez, the town can provide you with comfortable accommodations at its very reasonably priced 4-star **Parador**, a former Augustinian convent. It maintains the rather austere look of the old convent, with gardens and fountains, and all guest rooms are found on the second floor and sport floor to ceiling windows overlooking the different courtyards. The guest quarters are furnished in a somewhat simple, monastic style with painted wood headboards, wardrobes and chairs and terra-cotta floors. It makes for a tranquil spot to relax and to dine after a long journey through Southern Spain.

To reach Chinchón by bus, take the **green** La Veloz bus #337, Madrid - Chinchón - Valdelaguna, from Avenida del Mediterráneo, 49. You'll see the green buses on left side of street when coming out of metro stop Conde de Casal, grey circular line #6. See the Samar bus schedule at: samar.es/horarios/cercanias/madrid.

Buses leave every hour on the hour Monday through Saturday. On Sundays the ride takes 40 minutes. There are two stops for village; get off at the second stop. It's a short walk to the pretty balconied Plaza Mayor.

Note: There is no train service to Chinchón.

Lunch in Chinchón

In addition to the Parador dining, Chinchón offers several atmospheric taverns in and around the Plaza Mayor, several with rustic restaurants with balconies serving roast lamb, and is a popular weekend dining destination for *madrileños*. We've enjoyed dining at **La Balconada** and **Café de la Iberia**, recommended in the Repsol guide. Restaurante El Bodegón in the Parador offers a special 33€ menu.

Cuenca

The city of the spectacularly perched Hanging Houses and renowned Museum of Abstract Art lies 168 kilometers southeast of Madrid. As of December 2010, visitors became able to reach this fascinating town much more easily. The Madrid-Valencia high-speed AVE makes a stop in Cuenca ten times a day, making the smooth, comfortable ride from Madrid to Cuenca in only 55 minutes. We depart on the 8:40 am Alvia 05080, arriving at Cuenca's striking Fernando Zóbel station at 9:41 am. You can check current departures times and tariffs at www.renfe.com.

This rail station lies outside the city center and is connected to Cuenca's (uninspiring) lower town and its bus station by city bus, line 12. From the bus terminal in the lower town, visitors take another bus, line 1, to the upper Historic Quarter, where monuments, the cathedral and art museums are located, all sitting between two river gorges, the gorges formed by the Rivers Huécar and Júcar.

The second bus will take you to the main square, Plaza Mayor, the port of entry to the medieval, historic quarter, where you will find a small tourist office. Make sure to stop at the tourist office to pick up a very important map of the Historic Quarter, along with suggested walking routes.

Be sure to visit the following monuments:

Cathedral of Santa María de Gracia was built on the site of the ancient Moslem Mosque, construction began at the end of the 12th-century, the cathedral combines Romanesque and Gothic elements and has a striking and surprising collection of very modern stained glass. The combo ticket for the cathedral and its Museo Diocesano (treasure museum) costs €5. With your admission ticket you are given an excellent audio guide in English.

The cathedral is open June 1-September 30, Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 5:00 to 7:00 pm. On Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, and during August, it's open from 10:00

am to 7:00 pm. From November 3-May 31, it's open Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 to 5:00 pm, Saturdays and holidays from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, and on Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Check the schedule for the closing dates.

Museo Diocesano Catedralicio, at Obispo Valero, 3, houses religious art: paintings, altarpieces and tapestries from the Byzantine period to the Middle Ages. It is open from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Monday-Friday. On Saturday and holidays it's open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, on Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Admission: 2,50€ or purchase the combo ticket for the Cathedral and Museum for 5€.

Museo de Cuenca*, Obispo Valero, 12, is a quite interesting archeological museum filled with Roman artifacts, sculptures and coins from the Roman city of Segóbriga. Do not miss this museum! Admission is free on Saturdays. Open September 16-July 14, Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., then from 4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Sundays from

Rail bridge to the Fernando Zóbel Station

Cathedral of Santa María de Gracia

10:00-2:00 only. From July 15 to September 15, open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 5:00-7:00 pm. Closed Mondays

Museo de Arte Abstracto* is the gem of this artists' colony, housed in a 15th-century "Hanging House" (Casas Colgadas), precariously perched at the top of the deep gorge, seemingly hanging over the gorge. It is run by the Fundación Juan March and houses 129 paintings and sculptures from Abstract artists such as Eduardo Chillida, Antonio Saura, Gustavo Torner, Antoni Tapies, Jorge Oteiza and Andy Warhol and native son Fernando Zobel's personal collection. General admission is 3€, or 1,50€ for those over 65.

It is open Tuesday-Friday from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. On Saturdays it's open until 8:00 pm, and on Sundays from 11:00 am to 2:30 pm. Closed Mondays and January 1, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, September 18-20 and 21, December 24, 25, 31.

Fundación Antonio Pérez* - FAP is found back on the opposite side of the gorge at the north end of the Historic Quarter. It is housed in the former Carmelite Convent and displays the personal collection of artist Antonio Pérez, from Abstract to Pop Art with works from Millares, Lucebert, Carmen Calvo, Antonio Saura, Antojos and Laurel, in 35 rooms spread out over 4 floors.

Open daily from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 5:00 to 8:00 pm. Admission is 2€, and 1€ for those over 65, free for children under 10, and free on Wednesday evenings.

Museum Fundación Antonio Saura - located just a few meters from the Plaza Mayor on the Plaza San Nicolás in the historic Casa Zavala. It hosts a permanent collection of paintings of Abstract Expressionist Antonio Saura as well as temporary exhibits. Admission is 2,50€, and 1,50€ for seniors. Free for children under 10.

Open during the winter from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:00 to 7:00 pm. Summer hours are 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and 5:00 to 8:00 pm. Sundays and holidays it's open from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Lunch in Cuenca

El Figón del Huécar - Ronda Julián Romero, 6, next to the Posada de San José inn, is a charming small dining room overlooking the Huécar gorge in the former home of folk singer José Luis Perales.

While it does serve the typical Cuenca-La Mancha dishes of partridge and other game dishes, it does have vegetarian and fish options. Specialties include black tomato salad, puff pastry of vegetables and cray fish (*hojaldre de verduras y cangrejo del río*), bouillabaisse (*caldereta de pescado*) and for dessert, rice pudding with cinnamon ice cream (*crema de arroz con leche con helado de canela*).

The house wine, Fontal, is excellent. They are currently offering a menú del día for only 26€, including bread, glass of wine and water. Open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner.

Tel: (+34) 969 240 062

To purchase local wines, head to the small store, El Convento, on Calle San Pedro, 6, near the cathedral. They have an ample selection of local Castilla-La Mancha wines and cheeses.

Return to Madrid on the AVE 05163 departing at 5:43 pm, arriving at Atocha station at 6:35 pm. Please check the current schedule at www.renfe.com.

Important note: To return to the AVE Fernando Zóbel train station from the Historic quarter, you will need either to hail a taxi or to take **two** buses, which can be very time consuming, as the bus will only take you downtown to the bus station, where you have to catch the second bus, number 12, to the new AVE station. The bus only runs every 20 minutes, the ride takes 15 minutes.

Although there is a taxi stand on the Plaza Mayor, we have found that taxis are not usually waiting there. We have needed to ask the tourist office to call a taxi for us, so please note the opening hours of the tourist office at the Plaza Mayor when you arrive and allow plenty of time to make your way back to the AVE station.

The town fills with visitors on weekends, but like Sigüenza, during the week, Cuenca is quite a sleepy place.

Covered Markets

Mercado de la Paz*

My preferred market in my favorite neighborhood is found in aristocratic Salamanca district is at the corner of Calles Ayala and Lagasca. It's widely considered Madrid's most exclusive indoor market and attracts few tourists. It originates from 1879 and is one of the oldest, and most distinguished, in the city.

Here I shop for artisan breads and beautiful pastries, Spain's best canned goods, cheeses from all regions of Spain and for the finest Iberian ham, *pata negra*, at **La Boulette**, with several stands inside. La Boulette's Gran Reserva from Embutidos Blásquez is aged for 36 months-to be labeled Gran Reserva, hams must be aged for a minimum of 30 months. For more Iberian ham there's also **José Alvarez**, outside the market, who will hand slice and cryovac your order.

For Spain's spectacular canned goods, *conservas*: sardines, anchovies, mussels, cockles, I shop at **La Alacena del Gourmet**. For fresh pulses, I pick up a half kilo of *alubias* from Tolosa, *judiones* from La Granja, *verdinas* and *fabes* from Asturias at **Frutas Mari Carmen**. And for some of the city's finest pastries and macarons, there is a new branch of **Mamá Framboise**, in addition to the jewel box shop in the nearby *La Platea* gourmet food court.

The market is open Monday-Saturday from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm and 5:00 to 8:00 pm. The best time to arrive is around noon. It will be filled with the well-heeled locals who only buy the very best. And if your shoes are in need of repair, head to the Reparación de Calzados counter.

If you're feeling hunger pangs, inside the market you'll find several small counters. One, a bustling, loud and rather hectic lunch counter, **Casa Dani**, serves traditional Spanish fare to an egalitarian crowd of area workers and wealthy Salamanca denizens, and is a favorite of the King's aunt and a scattering of celebrities. It offers a killer *tortilla española* (a portion can easily be shared), rice with lobster, shrimp from Huelva, baby lamb chops and *guisos del día*, the stew of the day, at bargain prices.

The old time, very simple, counter only Croissanterie Ángela, located just outside the market at the Lagasca entrance, is also a contender for best *tortilla española* in the city.

Another, with only four tables and two small counters, dishing up contemporary Italian plates with pasta made on site: **La Cocin.ita**.

Mercado de Chamartín

Located near the Chamartín rail station in the northern business district, at Calle Bolivia, 9, and Calle Potosi, this market has some of the city's top purveyors, including another branch of Mamá Framboise, if you find yourself in this northern business district. The market is open Monday-Saturday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and Monday-Friday evenings from 5:00 to 8:00 pm.

Mercado de San Antón

Visitors can also food shop and sample at this renovated and lively market in the hip Chueca district at Augusto Figueroa, 24, corner of Libertad. It tempts with three floors and 22 vendors devoted to the best food and wine available in the city, including the Iberian ham purveyor, **Charcutería de Octavio**, a stylish Basque bar, La Alacena de Victor Montes, at which you can sample pintxos (Basque tapas), a branch of **Viena La Baguette** and a handy rooftop terrace restaurant, **El Cielo de San Antón**.

Much like the Mercado de San Miguel, this space is more devoted to food sampling rather than real day to day market shopping. Open daily from 10:00 am until midnight, 3:00 pm on Sundays.

The **Cocina de San Antón** restaurant on the market's top floor, with outdoor terrace, is run by the *Cinco Jotas Osborne Group*, and serves contemporary fare for reasonable prices, including a Monday-Friday lunch menú del día for under 15€. Open continuously from 10:00 am until midnight and until 1:30 am on Friday and Saturday. It's very popular for the well-priced food and the views.

Mercado de San Miguel

This lovely 1916 Beaux-Arts building of delicate ironwork and glass remained closed for several years until finally fully renovated, restored to its former glory and reopened in '09 to become one of the city's major gourmet food destinations and a "place to see and be seen". It boasts over 30 high-end shopping stalls that surround its central café area. Rather than a conventional market, this new concept is more of a leisure center for gourmands, and more Covent Garden than Boquería. One can purchase gourmet food from the stalls and wines from the several bars and enjoy them at the high tables in the open, central space.

If you love oysters and champagne, head to **Daniel Sorlut**; for some of the country's best wines by the glass, make your way to **Pinkleton and Wine**; for pastries or a plate of churros head to **El Horno de San Onofre**. For one of the finest labels of Iberian ham stop at **Carrasco Guijuelo**.

The market is open daily and keeps wide ranging hours, 10:00 am until midnight during the week, and until 2:00 am on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

While the market certainly merits a visit, do know that prices are high due to the high quality of the purveyors and its prime tourist-central location on Plaza San Miguel next to the Plaza Mayor. Also note that on Sunday afternoons, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, it becomes extremely congested as locals gather here after the Rastro flea market ends to have a wine and tapa before heading home for lunch.

Mercado de Antón Martín

Opened in 1941, the market is located at the Antón Martín metro stop where barrio Latina meets Lavapiés, a somewhat bohemian and very multi-ethnic quarter of the city, with entrance on Calle Santa Isabel and has been recently renovated. This is one of the city's most traditional markets. Although it has several lunch counters within, **Yokaloka** for sushi, **La Saletta** for Italian and a vermouth bar, **Latazo**, it does not scream thankfully, “*food court for tourists*”, as the Mercado San Miguel has become.

Neighborhood residents shop here on a daily basis and prices are lower than those of the Mercado La Paz, as this is a decidedly multicultural district rather than a posh area. The **Orbayu Sabores del Cantábrico** stand will tempt cheese lovers with its wonderful selection of Asturian artisan cheeses. Open 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, 3:00 pm on Saturdays.

The **Buns and Bones** casual eatery outside the market, entrance on Santa Isabel, to the left, as one walks east towards the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, has become quite popular for its Asian street food. It serves up Asian *bao* buns, which are steamed bread rolls with many different fillings (including some vegan options), along with grilled meats (the “bones” half), plus vegetable tempura, desserts and cocktails. It opens Tuesday-Sundays from 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm and from 8:00 until 1:00 am. Closed Mondays.

Mercado de Barceló

Calle Barceló, 6, near the Triball area, reopened last year after a complete remodel and now has around 100 stands on three floors selling deli products, Argentinian croissants, Italian pasta, canned goods, regional treats, cheese, fish/meat, fruits, vegetables, etc. It's open from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Monday-Friday, closed Saturday afternoons at 3:00 pm and all day Sunday.

Mercado de San Ildefonso

Like those found in London, the new street market, “**Taste & Smile**”, is located at the corner of hipster Fuencarral street, number 57, in the Malasaña neighborhood. Composed of

three floors covering 500 square meters, with 18 food stalls, 3 bars and two terraces, it's housed in the former site of Madrid's first covered market (1835), which was demolished in 1970 as part of the urban renewal project.

The concept here is to purchase your prepared foods (ceviches, tacos, hamburgers, steaks, Iberian ham, omelets, fried fish, sushi, etc.) and enjoy in situ with a beer or wine, or have a cocktail in the bar on the top floor. The market is open 365 days of the year from noon to midnight, 1:00 am Thursday-Saturday.

El Huerto de Lucas

Calle San Lucas, 13, in Chueca, was designed with the same street market concept, to enjoy one's purchases in situ or to take away, but all products are 100% organic. Here shoppers will find a bakery, a charcuterie, fruit and vegetable stand and butcher, plus a cosmetic shop and organic canteen, **La Cantina Orgánica**. Open daily from 10:00 to 10:00, restaurant is open until midnight. Closed Sundays,

Gourmet Experience Gran Vía

On the 9th floor of the El Corte Inglés department store at Plaza de Callao, 2, facing the Gran Vía, one can food shop, dine and admire spectacular city views all in one spot, and it's open continuously until midnight.

Dining options include both traditional Spanish food at **La Máquina**, San Sebastian style pintxos at **Asador Imanol**, bakery products at **Harina**, dim sum at **Tse Yang**, Mexican grub at **Central Mexiana**, burgers at **Hamburguesa Nostra**, oysters at **Juanillo Club**, hot dogs at **Perro Bar** and pizza at **Al Cuadrado**.

Gourmet Experience Serrano

Ditto to the brand new, but smaller and more exclusive Gourmet Experience in El Corte Inglés store at **Serrano, 52**, corner of Ayala-the men's apparel store, in the swank Salamanca district, where you'll find 3-Michelin starred chef David Muñoz's Asian street food counter, **StreetXO**, with larger, bright red U-shaped counter with open kitchen along with a cocktail bar. Much larger than its original counter space at the El Corte Inglés Gran Vía, now at 220 square meters, it offers expanded seating for 70-80 diners and its own private enclosed glass terrace. Five classic dishes from the former StreetXO continue here, including Chili Crab, while other avant-garde dishes are added on a rotating basis. *Beware: rock music absolutely blasts from the speakers!*

StreetXO is accompanied on the 7th floor by Robert Ruiz's Mexican counter, **Salón Cascabel**, and the 3-Michelin starred Roca Brothers' gourmet ice cream counter, **Rocambolesc**.

On the 6th floor you'll find the same epicurean market as the original one in Plaza de Callao, selling Spain's finest gourmet products.

More Food Shopping

In The Elegant Salamanca District

Although we always purchase our Iberian ham at the Mercado de la Paz, this new and noteworthy shop, Joselito's Velázquez, is both a boutique and elegant bistrot, has been opened by the Joselito brand at Velázquez, 30, just south of Goya.

Pasteleria Mallorca, a chic gourmet delicatessen at Serrano, 6, near Puerta de Alcalá, with a small outdoor terrace, which makes for interesting people watching, is a treat for the eyes and the palate. There is also one at Velázquez, 59, on the corner of Don Ramón de la Cruz. There's also a small branch on the top floor and in the basement of the upscale El Jardín de Serrano shopping complex on Goya at Serrano.

Mallorca is the more modest Madrid equivalent of Pecks gourmet emporium of Milan, or a kind of Gerard Mulot of the 6th Arr. in Paris. Exquisite take out fare. Open daily from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm.

La Pajarita, Villanueva, 14, off Serrano, a few steps from Plaza Colón, is known for its little caramel/milk chocolate “birds”.

Fonty, Calle Castelló, 12, for delicious French pastries and a small tea salon; some of the best croissants in the city!

Frinsa la Conservera, Claudio Coello, 38, is a seafood canned goods delicatessen, selling some of the finest canned mussels, cockles, razor clams, clams, and tuna from Galicia.

Oriol Balaguer, the Catalán master pastry chef and chocolate maker, who spend 7 years creating masterpieces at El Bulli, has located his shop on the eastern end of Calle Jorge Ortega y Gasset at number 44, just beyond the Plaza de Salamanca. Balaguer has been anointed “the best pastry chef in the world” and “the architect of chocolate”. His designer pastries and chocolates look like precious little jewels, and the store window of his boutique is more reminiscent of a very exclusive jeweler or interior design studio than a chocolate/pastry shop. If Cacao Sampaka is the Tiffany of chocolate shops, OB is the Cartier, or perhaps Chopard.

Harina (meaning flour) is an all-white airy space in a terrific location at Plaza de la Independencia, 10 (Puerta de Alcalá). It's where the well-heeled locals purchase their artisan breads, made with ecological flours, pastries, take away sandwiches or come for breakfast, a light lunch of a salad or sandwich or afternoon tea. We like their reasonably priced baguettes (roast beef, Iberian ham, chicken curry) for stocking a picnic.

You can enjoy your coffee, tea and pastries at one of the little white tables inside or on the outdoor terrace that faces Retiro Park.

Open from 9:00 am to 11:00 pm, it also makes a handy, delicious and affordable breakfast stop for those lodged at the Hospes, Wellington, Adler or AC Retiro hotels. Serving Brunch for 12,70€.

Lavinia, is the largest wine store in Europe, at Calle Jorge Ortega & Gasset, 16, is open from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm. Here one can purchase a Lavinia card, go to the tasting bar, insert card into machine and enjoy a taste of vaulted Vega Sicilia for under 14€ a glass.

If you don't want to venture to Lavinia, **Mantequerías Bravo** is a wonderful classic gourmet shop with excellent selection of wines and cavas just below the Mercado de la Paz at Ayala, 24. A beautiful old-time shop with a gorgeous wood and glass façade, in existence since 1931, now run by the third generation of the Bravo family. Here we often find prestigious wine labels that are not available at Lavinia.

Embassy, moving down, west, on Calle Ayala, for watching the aristocratic set of the Salamanca district food shop or enjoy a weekend brunch, there's no better place than at Ayala,12, on the corner of Castellana Boulevard. It's the city's most chic delicatessen/tea salon and watering hole of the well-heeled Salamanca district set, where they have been shopping since 1931. One can stop in for a cocktail, for tea or for brunch in its elegant restaurant or tea salon. In the summer it opens an outdoor terrace for late night cocktails.

Platea Madrid is another gastronomic food hall of sorts, 5,800 square meters large, opened in the former Carlos III Theater, sits on Calle Goya near the Meliá Gran Fénix Hotel. Not a market at all, but rather a collection of food counters and bars on the ground floor and the basement, where one can order dishes-- from Spanish to Peruvian to Italian to Japanese, and takes it to one of the tables in the center of this cavernous, 62,000 square feet space. Three Michelin-starred chefs got together to create five food counters, Sinergías - you can choose from Spanish tapas to baguettes and salad to seafood to stews.

Inside this vast gourmet space, with entrance on Hermosilla, you'll also find **Mamá Framboise**, a jewel of a patisserie, with a new branch in the Mercado de la Paz, at the corner of Calles Lagasca and Ayala.

It also offers a bistrot, **Arriba**, on the second floor, a creation of Michelin-starred Catalán chef, Ramón Freixa, with tables arranged towards center stage. This space is not a recreation of his Michelin-starred restaurant in the Hotel Unico but instead an informal space offering simple and unpretentious fare. It's open daily for lunch from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. and for dinner from 8:30 until midnight.

The best time to come may be for its after-work cocktail scene at El Patio bar. Drinks are brought to the tables and on the screen of the stage there are DJ music clips. Or come at night to have a cocktail on the balcony floor, El Palco, at the very top of the building.

While it is architecturally interesting, for us this space still lacks soul, the 'Eat Italy' of Madrid, of sorts.

Gastronomic Shopping Triangle

For Food Lovers

In an area south of Plaza Santa Bárbara, between Plaza Colón and Plaza Alonso Martínez, in the trendy Las Salesas neighborhood.

Poncelet*, Calle Argensola, 27, right off Calle Sagasta, offers cheese lovers more than 300 varieties from all over Europe (France, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, England), including 90 labels from all the D.O.P. cheese producing regions of Spain.

Try the cabrales, a blend of goat, ewe's and cow's milk, very blue, aged in the mountain caves of Picos de Europa, on the Asturias side. Picón Bejes-Treviso is another blue cheese from the Cantabrian side of Picos de Europa. Afuega'l pitu is a fresh cheese spiked with paprika, also from Asturias, along with taramundi, a cow's milk cheese from the Los Oscos mountain region of western Asturias. Torta del casar or torta de La Serena, is a delicious, runny, raw ewe's milk cheese from Extremadura, and Torta Montes de Toledo, a goat's cheese from Castilla-La Mancha. Tetilla, mild and soft, is from Galicia. Payoyo de Grazalema, from Andalusian, is a blend of ewe and goat's milk. Garrotxa, a slightly nutty, goat's milk cheese with a blue grey mold, is from the volcanic region of Garrotxa in Catalunya, while Idiazábal and Roncal, are ewe's milk cheeses from the Basque Country and Navarra.

It also has a gourmet space reserved for the sale of foie, marmalades, breads and crackers, and includes a Vinoteca. The staff will guide you to the best and allow you to taste before purchasing.

Open from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm, Monday-Friday, and Saturdays from 10:30 am to 8:30 pm. The owners have opened a gourmet cheese restaurant, **Poncelet Cheese Bar**, listed in the dining guide.

Viena La Crem, Calle Santa Brígida, 6, perpendicular to Fuencarral, the original shop opened in 1931 as Viena La Baguette, and is considered one of the best bread shops in the city. Breads come in all flavors-sesame, tomato, olive oil, beet, etc. The bakers make delicious buttery croissants as well.

Amaté, Argensola, 6, is a shop selling 150 varieties of teas of all aromas, along with tea accessories; kettles, cups, cookies, marmalades, syrups and even candles. Open Monday-Saturday from 11:00 am to 2:30 and from 5:00 to 8:30 pm.

La Duquesita*, Calle Fernando VI, 2, La Duquesita is one of the most famous bakeries in the city and has been in existence since 1914. Recently closed, it has been reopened by the country's most famous pastry chef, Oriol Balaguer. Even if you're not in the market for a

pastry, peek in to see its original wood façade and interiors. Here is where you should purchase their specialty, the *naranjines*, sliced orange peel dipped in dark chocolate or *lenguas de gato*, cats' tongues. Open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am to 8:30 pm, Saturdays from 9:30 am, Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Mamá Framboise*, also on Calle Fernando VI, at number 23, is the labor of love of very talented pastry chef Alejandro Montes. It was the first French boulangerie/pâtisserie in the city, and now with a branch in the enormous gourmet emporium Platea Madrid Gourmet Space at Plaza Colón and one in the Mercado de la Paz in the Salamanca district.

Standout items here are their tiramisu, raspberry and lemon tarts, chocolate and orange cake and their macarons. One can also enjoy salads, quiches and sandwiches along with great coffee, tea, hot chocolate or wines.

They've recently opened a branch at the Madrid-Barajas airport, Terminal 4, for those who can't resist taking home some of their wonderful treats. This branch is open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday-Friday, and from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Pomme Sucre*, on the corner of trendy Calles Barquillo and Fernando VI, is a wonderful new Parisian bakery-type spot, which serves the most delicious almond croissants and pain au chocolate (1,50€) in town, along with gorgeous tartes and cakes to take away. Come here after a morning of window-shopping in the hip neighborhood boutiques and sit down for a Nespresso coffee and pastry, terrific!

El Pollo Gamberro, Barquillo, 34, is the latest venture of Michelin-starred chef Sergi Arola, which offers gourmet rotisserie chicken-free-range chickens from a farm in Palencia roasted in an organic coal oven. Other offerings include salads, chicken cannelloni and croquettes. Opens daily for lunch from noon to 4:00 pm, 5:00 pm on Sunday, and Monday-Thursday for dinner from 8:00 to 11:30 pm, 1:30 am on Friday and Saturday. Closed Sunday evening.

Patrimonio Comunal Olivarero*, Calle Mejía Lequerica, 1, at the corner of Hortaleza, one block south of Plaza Santa Bárbara, has an amazing selection of extra virgin oils from every D.O. in Spain-150 labels. This cooperative is the best spot in the city to purchase Spain's finest oils, some of which are sold in tins for easier transporting in one's luggage. I purchase my favorites here: Carrizos, Artajo, Alfar la Maja and Abbae de Queiles. Prices are from 8,50-14€. Open daily from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, closed Sunday afternoons. In July they are open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, but closed all of August.

Cacao Sampaka, Orellana, 4, below and parallel to Génova, and adjacent to the Plaza Santa Bárbara, is the Madrid outpost of Barcelona's chic chocolate emporium created by the brother of Ferrán Adriá of Restaurant El Bulli.

This is a chocoholic's paradise, selling 64 types of bonbons filled with spices, flowers, herbs, fruits, liquors, plus recipe books, little fondue casseroles and a with a bar/cafe for yummy chocolate desserts and drinks. Here you can also have breakfast, a salad, or a lunch menu for under 12€, or just a drink and dessert. The cafeteria opens at 9:00 am for breakfast.

La Garriga Génova, Génova 21, near Plaza Colón, is the third Madrid branch of the swank 50-year old charcutería founded in Tenerife, selling the finest labels of Iberian ham and artisan cheeses. One can enjoy sandwiches and salads at one of the high tables. Open Monday-Friday from 8:30 am to 11:30 pm and Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 am.

My Favorite Shopping Haunts

A note on shopping in Madrid - Shops are usually open from 09:30 am to 1:30 or 2:00 pm, then reopen again at 4:30 or 5:00 pm and stay open until 8:00 or 8:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Most smaller shops and boutiques close for siesta, and some do not reopen on Saturdays. The book-video-music store, FNAC, on Calle Preciados, is open Monday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 9:30 pm and on Sundays from 11:30 am to 9:30 pm, and doesn't close during siesta. El Corte Inglés, and other mega-stores, are allowed by law to be open on eight Sundays during the year.

Shopping in Old Madrid

Charming, centuries old family-run shops

Capes

Capas Seseña, Calle Cruz, 23, off the Puerta del Sol, founded in 1910. Hillary Clinton bought two on her last visit. This house of capes has outfitted actors (Pierce Brosnan), artists (Picasso), politicians and Nobel Prize winners. They also have exquisite and expensive hand embroidered silk shawls, *mantones de Manila*, to wear to a fancy ball, or to drape over that grand piano.

Fans

Casa de Diego, at Puerta del Sol, 12, sells fans, walking sticks and umbrellas, and has been in business since 1858. Come here to purchase the traditional Spanish ladies' fan. Princess Leitizia used one at her wedding.

Hats

Casa Yustas, Plaza Mayor, 30, for a *Boina Elosegui*, a Basque beret from Tolosa, or Cordovan riding hat to wear at your next costume party, or just for the man in your life.

Hand Embroidered Silk Shawls

Casa Gil Antolín Quevedo, Carrera de San Jerónimo, 2, has been in the business since 1880, with clients ranging from royalty to politicians and artists, including Gloria Estefan and Joaquín Sabina. Many of the touristy souvenir shops around the Puerta del Sol also sell shawls, but they can be of poor quality, machine made and surely from China. Most all shawls now are made in China; just make sure it's 100% silk and hand embroidered.

Espadrilles

Antigua Casa Crespo, Calle del Divino Pastor, 29, in the funky but now every-so-trendy Malasaña district. This shop of the Grabayo family opened in 1863 as a store selling articles made of hemp. The family began specializing in the making of espadrilles, and now they sell more than 50 different models in all shapes and color, still hand woven and sewed. Princess Leitzia and Queen Sofía are among their list of customers.

Casa Hernanz, with its long wooden counter that dates back to the 19th century, the store can be found just off Plaza Mayor at Calle Toledo, 18. Featured in the NY Times, it's been owned by the same family for five generations. The traditional espadrilles, still made by hand, cost from 5,00€ to 30€. Open Monday and Friday from 9:30 am to 1:30 and 4:30 to 8:00 pm, Saturdays from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. Closed Tuesday-Thursday.

Cristina Castañer, Claudio Coello 51, sells chic and contemporary espadrilles along with bags. You'll find another store on trendy Calle Almirante at number 8. Other branches can be found in Barcelona and Paris.

Sweets and Pastries

Casa Mira, This shop, open since 1842, at Carrera de San Jerónimo, 30, purveyors to the Royal Family, is *the* place in the city to purchase the Christmas treat, *turrón* from Jijona, an almond nougat candy, and marzipan plus the typical All Saints Day treat, *huesos del santo*, and the customary Holy Week dessert, *torrijas*, the Spanish version of French toast.

La Violeta, Plaza de Canalejas, 6, and Carrera de San Jerónimo is another Madrid institution for sweets in the shape of violets-look for the violet decorated awning. Also has nice marron glace. This is a classic that's been around since 1915 and now run by the granddaughter of the founders. Everyone loves the violet candies and the beautiful packaging. There is now an [online store](#).

El Convento de las Carboneras, An experience like no other, buying sweets from the cloistered nuns in a convent founded in the year 1607 by one of the queen's ladies in waiting. They offer cookies, *rosquillas*, a type of hard donut. To purchase one of their treats, one knocks on a small door to the right of the main church entrance at Plaza del Conde de Miranda, 3. A nun will appear at the revolving window (called a *torno*), you tell her what and how much you want to buy.

Or you can purchase all the nuns' specialties at a shop, **El Jardín del Convento** at Calle del Cordón, 1, a parallel street behind the Plaza de la Villa.

El Riojano*, Calle Mayor, 10, between Puerta del Sol and Plaza de la Opera, right side walking towards the Opera. Founded by a Rioja family in 1855 and has barely changed since

then. El Riojano has been a supplier of sweets to the Royal Family since its founding. The shop has a beautiful interior décor in mahogany, marble and bronze.

Make sure to stop by here when in Madrid during the Xmas season to try one of the best King Cakes, *roscón de Reyes*, in town. Also try an *azucarillo*, traditionally eaten with eau de vie. It also has a small tea salon with ten tables in the back. It closes for siesta from 2:00 to 5:00 pm, Saturday afternoons and Sunday afternoons.

Horno la Santiagüesa*, at Calle Mayor, 73, on the left side, walking down to the Teatro Real, beyond the Plaza de la Villa. This is another Madrid classic (Horno San Onofre) with beautiful mahogany interior, known for its Galician tartas de Santiago, turnovers (*empadanas*) chocolates, mousses and breads. They ship their famous King Cakes to all parts of Europe. Open Monday-Saturday, 8:00 am to 9:30 pm, Sunday 9:00 am to 9:00 pm.

La Mallorquina, Located directly on the Puerta del Sol, at Calle Mayor, 2, this is an emblematic pastry shop, coffee bar and tea salon (upstairs) founded by a Mallorca family in 1849. The specialties here include Neopolitans (*napolitanas*) filled with pastry cream or chocolate, along with chocolate truffles, croissants, *bayonesas*, *rosquillas* (a type of small, hard donut) and *torteles*. Along with the pastry shops mentioned above, they also sell King Cakes for Christmas. The shop sells savory items as well, such as the Asturian, chorizo filled, *bollo preñado*. Open daily 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, but closed in August.

La Antigua Pastelería del Pozo, Calle Pozo 2, founded in 1860, is one of the Madrid denizen's favorite spots to pick up a King Cake, a *roscón de Reyes*, for Epiphany, January 6 (they do sell them all year). Closed Monday.

Motteau, Calle San Pedro, 9, in Las Letras, while not a centuries-old Madrid icon, is a lovely French-style pastry shop with a charming vintage interior decor, run by a passionate pastry chef who studied at Paris' *Ecole de Boulangerie et Pâtisserie*. Argentinian owner Juan Manuel D'Alessandro, whose great-great grandparents hailed from Normandy, makes only 16 croissants per day, that fly out the door, along with a fabulous lemon tartlet, a tartlet of white chocolate, raspberries and pistachios, a tarte tatin, brownies, carrot cake and cheesecake. Open Tuesday-Friday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and 4:30 to 8:00 pm, Saturdays from 10:30 am to 3:00 pm.

Iberian ham

Alma de Julián Becerro, Iberian ham purveyor located on the tavern-lined Cava Baja at number 41. Not a century's-old shop but instead a new purveyor opened to catch the tourist trade on the Cava Baja. You'll find another branch of Julián Becerro Jamonería on pedestrian Calle Arenal at number 28, on the right side going towards the Teatro Real. Both a gourmet shop and ham tapas bar. Open daily from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm.

Carrasco Guijuelo has a stand inside the Mercado de San Miguel, Calle Príncipe Felipe, 25, on Plaza San Miguel, just steps from the Plaza Mayor.

Enrique Tomás, Barcelona based chain in Old Madrid at Calle Tetuán, 19, with several other branches in the city. Sells ham “cones” filled with 70 grams of Iberian ham. Products come from the four official Iberian ham D.O.s, Extremadura, Los Pedroches, Guijuelo and Jabugo.

Gondíaz, Plaza de la Marina Española, 7, near the Royal Palace and Senate. This shop sells hams from the prestigious labels of Sánchez Ramiro Carvajal and Joselito along with wines and cavas. There are five tables for patrons to sit and taste the shop’s wares. And shoppers can even take a ham-carving course, considered to be a genuine art form. Closed Saturday.

Jamones López Pascual, Corredera Baja de San Pablo, 13, in Triball, off the Gran Vía, opened in 1919 and is today run by the grandson of the founder. Here you can purchase the Cinco Jotas and Joselito labels and taste the products at the little bar.

Viandas de Salamanca is a chain with a branch at Calle Montera, 3, near Puerta de Sol. Open daily from 10:30 am.

Cheese

Casa González, Calle León, 12, one of the Old City’s most noteworthy delicatessens, has been in business since 1931, and specializes in catalán-cured meats, Iberian ham, cheeses, marmalades and foie. It has a cozy back room with antique marble-topped tables where ham and cheese platters are served, accompanied by an extensive, well-chosen wine list. If you decide to indulge in a ham or cheese tapas meal, go before 9:00 pm to find an empty table, as it’s very popular with the locals.

Decorative Ceramics

Antigua Casa de Talavera, Located at Calle de Isabel la Católica, 2, below the Hotel Santo Domingo, this is a virtual treasure trove of ceramics run by a brother and sister duo, 4th generation, having been in business since 1904.

You’ll find lovely pieces from the ceramic producing towns of Talavera de la Reina, El Puente de Arzobispo, La Bisbal in Catalunya and Granada. It’s a great stop if you like ceramics and decorative tiles, and still have room in your luggage. All items are packed very well for carrying or shipping. They now accept credit cards.

Linens

Borcasa, Marqués Viudo de Pontejos, 2, at the corner of Calle Esparteros. This recommendation is courtesy of a Fodorite who stayed at the lovely Casa de Madrid, whose owner sent her here to buy gorgeous sheets.

Spanish sheets are not the same size as American, so be sure to measure your bed prior to departing home. They also sell tablecloths and napkins. Eli is the owner and speaks very good English. Tel: (+34) 915 326 153.

Youthful Fashions

Two fashion labels that haven't yet crossed the pond and made it to the US are **Hakei**, with Madrid boutiques on pedestrianized Calle Arenal at number 8, and on urban hipster Fuencarral at number 35, and **Divina Providencia**, with a boutique shop at Fuencarral, 42. Both fashion labels have branches in the Salamanca district as well.

Casual Shoes

Camper, The casual shoe from Mallorca. Downtown on the Gran Vía at No. 54, off the Gran Vía at Preciados, 2, and in all El Corte Inglés department stores

Flamenco CDs

El Flamenco Vive, Conde de Lemos, 7, near the Teatro Real. Lots of flyers to tell you what's going on in the flamenco scene.

Flamenco Guitars

Manuel Contreras González, Calle Segovia, 57, in La Latina.

Juan Alvarez, Calle de San Pedro 7, in Letras, off Calle Moratín. Classical and flamenco guitars. Clients have included Compay Segundo and Eric Clapton.

Guitarras Manzanaro, Santa Ana, 12

José Ramírez, Calle de la Paz, 8, with a museum in its back room displaying guitars dating back to 1830.

Flamenco shoes and dresses

Menkes, Calle Juan de Olias, 21

Yebra, Luis Vélez de Guevara, 16

Maty, Calle Hileras, 7, or at Maestro Victoria, 2, in Old Madrid. Founded in 1943, this is the place to purchase all your flamenco wear-costumes, shoes, combs, as well as ballet shoes and regional costumes.

Calzados de Arte, Cabeza, 30

Don Flamenco, Calle de Santa Isabel, 7, in the Lavapiés quarter. Sells handmade flamenco dance shoes to flamenco artists worldwide.

Bespoke Tailors

Sastrería Gonzalo Larraínzar (López Herbón), Calle Conde de Aranda, 8. Known as the King's tailor, is now in its third generation. Clients have included the Ronald Regan, Zubin Metha, King Juan Carlos, Plácido Domingo and Oscar de la Renta.

Justo Algaba, This tailor (sastrería), at Calle La Paz, 4, near the Puerta del Sol, has been supplying bullfighting equipment and making suits of lights for 40 years for such toreadors as Curro Romero, Rafael de Paula, El Juli and Enrique Ponce. Other clients have included Andy Garcia, Lola Flores, Plácido Domingo and La Toya Jackson.

A matador will need five or six suits per season. Justo also rents suits for movies and television, including the outfit worn by the female matador in Almodóvar's "Talk to Her" and to operas around the world performing Carmen.

It takes 7 people working 8 hours a day for a month to make one suit, with each suit costing over 2.000€ each, as they're richly decorated with hand-sewn sequined rosettes and the jackets must be very stiff and padded like heavy armor. You can buy a pair of matador's pink socks for 50€. He also sells used suits.

Alejandro Herguera Zurro has been the "cape tailor" to Spain's (and France's) leading bullfighters, including Manzanares, José Tomás and El Cid, for 38 years from his workshop at Calle Esparteros, 16, near Puerta del Sol. His capes can weigh up to four kilograms, take about 3 hours to make and cost between 285-350€. The top matadors can use up to 60 capes per year.

Music, books, maps and guidebooks

FNAC, Preciados, between Callao and the Puerta del Sol, is five floors of books, videos and music. You can also purchase tickets for rock concerts downstairs. It's open from 10:00 am to 9:30 pm, Monday-Saturday and Sundays from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm.

Casa Del Libro, Gran Vía, 29, Maestro Victoria, 3, near Sol, and five more branches.

Librería Desnivel, Plaza Matute, 6, in the Letras district is a travel and adventure bookshop selling maps and books covering all parts of Spain and other countries. Open Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 8:30 pm and Saturdays from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm.

De Viaje, Serrano, 41, in the swank Salamanca quarter, is a travel agency, bookshop and travel gear boutique combo, selling maps and travel books for around the globe as well as some Spain travel guides in English.

Wines

Bodegas Trigo, Calle San Pedro, 8, in the Letras district offers a small but interesting wide-ranging selection of wines from most all the Spanish appellations, plus beers from around the world, and gourmet food products. It is also a wine bar. Open Monday-Friday from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm and 5:00 to 8:30 pm and on Saturdays from 9:30 to 2:30 pm only.

Licores María Cabello, Echegaray, 19, in the Letras, near Las Cortes (Parliament) is a family-run shop from 1913 that carries more than 500 labels. Included in several Old Madrid shopping tours. Never closes.

Artisan jewelry

Helena Rohner, Calle del Almendro, 4, in the heart of La Latina, is one of Europe's most imaginative designers of jewelry, who makes her creations from stone, wood, silver, Murano glass and porcelain.

El Corte Inglés

For Virtually Everything Under The Sun

Spain's only department store is a city in itself. The main complex is located at the Puerta del Sol area on Calle Preciados. You can't possibly miss it. There are several buildings, one for fashions (moda), which is the original main store at C/Preciados, 3, with an enormous basement supermarket. For very specialty gourmet items, you'll want to visit its Club del Gourmet. It has a travel agency where you can purchase train tickets, and there is also have a music store (discotienda), a sports store (deportes) and a bookstore (librería), in the same area.

These stores are open Monday-Saturday, 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, and on eight specified Sundays during the year, when the hours change to 11:00 am to 9:00 pm, and usually open every Sunday in December. You can see the Sunday opening days at: www.elcorteingles.es. At the very bottom of the page click on "*horarios/días de apertura*", it will give you the opening hours for all of the stores throughout Spain and Portugal.

The Serrano branch mostly handles high-end merchandise and designer clothing/shoes, and even has a basement supermarket and handy top floor cafeteria (coffee shop).

For non-European Union residents El Corte Inglés offers a 10% Welcome Discount at all of their stores. Before you begin your shopping, head to a Customer Service Desk (Atención al Cliente) to obtain your discount card. You must show a passport or photo ID for proof that you are a foreign resident and not a European Union member. Then show your card each time you make a purchase.

Gourmet Food Items To Take Home

These can be found in the top floor of the El Corte Inglés department store on Callao off the Puerta del Sol, the “Gourmet Experience” and also the “Gourmet Experience” in the El Corte Inglés men’s apparel branch, 6th floor, on Calle Serrano, corner of Ayala in the Salamanca district.

Some can be found in the basement supermarket of the main **El Corte Inglés** and many can be purchased in the **Mercado La Paz** indoor market at the corner of Lagasca and Ayala in the swank Salamanca quarter.

For superb canned seafood goods that make lovely gourmet gifts (mussels, cockles, tuna) the **Frinsa La Conservera** has a delicatessen at Claudio Coello 38 and another handy for those staying near the Puerta del Sol at Calle Mayor, 49.

And for last minute shopping for gourmet products, save time at the airport for a stroll through the gourmet shop **Sibarium** (T1, T4 and T4S).

Look for the following specialty items:

- *Olive oil: Duque de Baena, Dauro, Aubocassa, Abbae de Queiles, Anima Aurea, Carrizos, la Maja, Marqués de Griñón, Castillo de Canena labels*
- *Olives: La Española or Serpes (anchovy filled)*
- *Black truffle mousse: Mousse de Trufa Nega Elfos*
- *Wild mushroom mousse: Mousse de Niscalos Elfos*
- *Olive paté: Paté de Olivas Anima Aurea*
- *Canned albacore tuna: Bonito del Norte Don Bocarte or Ortiz*
- *Canned berberechos (cockles) and mussels: Los Peperetes or Frinsa*
- *Canned anchovies: Sanfilippo*
- *Canned white clams: Los Peperetes*
- *Canned white asparagus: La Catedral de Navarra*
- *Honey: Miel de Romero Valmiel from Cuenca*
- *Vinegar: Vinagre de Jerez Domecq*
- *Red Piquillo peppers: Pimientos del Cristal El Navarrico*
- *Spanish paprika: Pimentón de La Vera Santo Domingo*
- *Paella rice: Illa de Riu from Tarragona or La Bomba Calasparra from Murcia (Can be purchased in US at Williams Sonoma)*
- *Pyrenees cheese: Roncal Larra (from Navarra) and Idiazábal Arántzazu (from Guipúzcoa, Basque Country)*

- *Asturian cheese: Afuega'l Pitu, blue-veined Cabrales, blue veined La Peral, Gamonedo, Casín*
- *Cantabrian cheese: Bejes-Picón-Tresviso*
- *Galician cheese: Arzúa-Ulloa, San Simón, Tetilla*
- *Extremadura cheese: Torta del Casar, Ibores, de La Serena*
- *Madrid cheese: Suerte Ampanera (goat) from the village Colmenar Viejo*
- *Andalusian cheese: Payoyo from the village of Grazalema*
- *Castilian cheese: Torta de Cañarejal from Valladolid*
- *Sherry (finos): Amontillado VORS Tradición or Fino Navazos Bota no 27*
- *Manzanilla: Aurora by Pedro Romero*
- *Pedro Ximénez: P.X. Venerable*
- *Brandy: Gran Duque de Alba Oro or Cardenal Mendoza Carta Real*
- *Cognac: Lepanto*
- *Dessert wine: exquisite Casta Diva Cosecha Miel from Alicante. It's divine! Or Chivite Colección 125 Vendimia Tardía.*
- *Cava, Spain's bubbly: Gramona III Lustros Gran Reserva or Parés Baltà Cuvée de Carol*

Outlet Mall

You'll find an outlet village in a Madrid suburb, **Las Rozas Village**, 30 minutes away off the A6, with 40+ outlet stores, including Camper, Antonio Miró, Farrutx and Mandarina Duck, but probably not worth the time and effort UNLESS you want to make a stop on route by car to Segovia or El Escorial. During the July-August and after Christmas sales, prices in Madrid will be equally attractive.

Fashion Shopping

In the Salamanca District

Shoes

- **Camper**, Ayala, 13, or Serrano, 24.
- **Lotusse**, Serrano, 68, in Jardín de Serrano gallery.
- **El Caballo**, Lagasca, 55, with gorgeous leather bags as well.
- **Farrutz**, Serrano, 7, is trendy/fashionable, produced on the island of Mallorca.
- **Jaime Mascaró***, Hermosilla, 22, corner of Claudio Coello. Designer hails from Menorca, and has two stores in NYC.
- **Ursula Mascaró***, Claudio Coello, 61.
- **Acosta***, Claudio Coello, 46, for gorgeous leather handbags and classy shoes.
- **Manolo Blahnik**, Serrano, 58 (interior)
- **Christian Louboutin**, Claudio Coello, 13, corner of Conde de Aranda.
- **Cristina Castañer***, Claudio Coello, 51, for stylish espadrilles.
- **Bravo Java***, Serrano, 56.

Leather Gloves

- **Guantes Varadé**, Serrano, 54.

Handbags

- **Longchamp**, Calle Serrano between the Loewe boutique and Mallorca gourmet delicatessen. Prices are identical to Paris. El Corte Inglés' Serrano branch also carries Longchamp.

Lingerie

- **!Ay qué luna!**, Ayala, 32.
- **3 en Claudio**, Claudio Coello, 47.
- **Women's Secret**, Serrano, 29.

For Exquisite Leather Goods

Loewe, with stores at Serrano, 26, on the Gran Vía, in the Palace Hotel and branches all over Spain offering the softest, buttery leather purses in the whole world, totally impractical. Gucci purchases leather from them. Family sold the business to L. Vuitton. Their men's

store is at the Jardín de Serrano on the corner of Serrano and Goya. Women's wear store is on Serrano, on the corner of Jorge Juan. The piece de resistance here is their beautiful Hermes type scarves. Be sure to ask for a VAT refund form when you shop (passport required).

For Hand Milled Soaps

The dark brown **Magno/La Toja**, green **Heno de Pravia**, or **Maja**, in the black box, with the Spanish señorita with fan, on cover, a available at any perfumería, and make inexpensive, easy to carry gifts for the ladies.

Spanish Perfumes & Colognes

- **Adolfo Domínguez** and **Agua Fresca de Rosas** by designer A. Domínguez
- **Duende** and **In Black** by designer Jesús del Pozo,
- **Carmen**, **Abril**, **Agua de Rocío**, **Bambi**, **Luz** and **V&L** by Seville's Victorio & Lucchino
- **Gala Día**, **Gala Noche**, **Aire**, **Esencia Femme** and **L** by Loewe, which you can't purchase stateside.
- **Esencia** by Loewe is a heady men's cologne/after shave.

Beautiful Children's Apparel

- **Friki**, Don Ramón de la Cruz, 26
- **Tartine et Chocolate**, Ayala, 24
- **Nanos**, Hermosilla, 21
- **Mi Pequeño Lucas**, Lagasca, 46
- **Normandie**, Lagasca, 44
- **La Oca Loca**, Lagasca, 61
- **Spantapájaros**, Lagasca, 50
- **Metro Kids**, Lagasca, 56
- **Tuc Tuc**, Lagasca, 50
- **Bonpoint**, Ortega y Gasset, 15
- **Nenunco**, General Oraá, 61
- **Nancy Niños**, Diego de León, 29

Shopping Refreshment Breaks

In the Salamanca District

For Valencian horchata, turrón, fardones

Horchatería Alboraya, at Alcalá, 125, is the place to come for authentic, artisan *horchata de chufa*, the almondy-tasting, refreshing summer drink of Valencia, served with the traditional *fardones*, that one dips into the drink. It also offers *granizados* (like a slush) in various fruit flavors and *leche merengada*. Open 11:00 am to 10:30 pm daily.

For an ice cream break

You'll find a branch of this high concept Argentinean artisanal ice cream chain, **Giangrossi**, at Velázquez, 41, at the corner of Hermosilla. Also serves breakfast and lunch.

For a coffee/tea break

The branches of the chic gourmet delicatessen **Mallorca**, on Serrano near the Puerta de Alcalá (with small outdoor terrace), or the one on Velázquez, 59, on the corner of Don Ramón de la Cruz, make for interesting people watching. There's also a small branch on the top floor and in the basement of the upscale **El Jardín de Serrano** shopping complex on Goya at Serrano. Mallorca is the more modest Madrid equivalent of Pecks gourmet emporium of Milan, or a kind of Gerard Mulot of the 6th Arr. in Paris. Exquisite take out fare.

For an inexpensive tapas break

Lateral Velázquez, at Calle Velázquez, 57, on the corner of Calle Don Ramón de la Cruz, is the Salamanca branch of a small chain of stylish tapas bars, popular with the area workers for their reasonably priced luncheon menu. Stop by Sunday-Thursday from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm for your afternoon snack (*merienda*). Open Sunday-Wednesday from noon to 1:00 am and Thursday, Friday and Saturday until 2:00 am.

For a reasonably priced weekend brunch

- **El Perro y la Galleta**, Claudio Coello on the corner of Alcalá facing Retiro Park
- **Fonty**, Castelló, 12
- **El Velázquez 17**, at Calle Velázquez, 17

Note: You may notice a large branch of Pain Quotidien on the corner of Serrano and Hermosilla, and while very popular, particularly with families on weekends, I find the bread/pastries/dishes rather uninspired, although the menu does feature many vegetarian and gluten free options.

Madrid Nightlife

An Evenings Entertainment Guide

Madrid has one of the most active nightlife scenes in Europe. Possibilities are almost endless. On Saturday nights the traffic is as intense at 3:00 am as it is at 3:00 pm. Check Timeout.com/Madrid, or Softguides.com/Madrid/ to get you started. Their entertainment sections are great resources for what's going on at night in Madrid. If you read Spanish, then check out guiadelocio.com, it's a kind of "Pariscope" for Madrid.

Flamenco

There are several venues for flamenco in Madrid. The rule of thumb with flamenco is the later the hour, the fierier, more spirited the flamenco will become and the more "duende" (soul) it will have. When fellow flamenco artists drop by the tablaos late at night, the performances heat up. Performances for the tourist audience only may often seem uninspired, the dancers just going through the motions, but if you're not a real aficionado you may not notice. See deflamenco.com for their recommendations.

We feel that the most authentic and intimate is **Casa Patas** in Old Madrid at Calle Cañizares 10. On Monday and Tuesday nights there are two 90-minute performances starting at 9:00 and midnight. Tickets for the performance include one drink and cost around 36€. This flamenco club also has a handy bar/café/restaurant that starts serving dinner at 7:30. Prices are reasonable.

Another older and famous venue, a true flamenco nightclub or *tablao*, is the **Corral de la Morería**, in Old Madrid at Morería, 17, close to the Royal Palace, inaugurated in 1956. It attracts Spain's premier talent and offers nightly performances at 8:30 and 10:20. The price for the performance and drink is 41,30€ plus 21% vat tax.

Equally famous, with a sumptuous décor, is the **Café de Chinitas** at Calle Torrija 7, occupying the ground floor of a 17th-century palace, where one can dine and watch the flamenco performance. There are two nightly performances, beginning at 8:00 and 10:30, closed Sundays. This is the priciest venue in town, with a gourmet dinner plus show costing 81€. Just the show and drink costs 38€.

Las Carboneras, Calle Conde de Miranda, 1, is located in the basement of the old palace of the Count of Miranda. Show and a drink is 28€. Their 15th Anniversary Menu is 67,50€, while the Flamenco Menu is 74,50€. Open daily.

Yet another venue, handily located in the Barrio de las Letras at Echegaray, 15, is **Cardamono**, which attracts a younger crowd. Offers three shows daily starting at 6:00 pm (25€ for the show and a glass of sangria). The 10:00 pm show is 39€, one drink included.

Read the reviews of the venues to compare:

- www.flamencotickets.com/casa-patas-madrid
- www.flamencotickets.com/corral-de-la-moreria-madrid
- www.flamencotickets.com/tablaol-las-carboneras-madrid
- www.flamencotickets.com/cardamomo-madrid
- www.flamencotickets.com/cafe-de-chinitas-madrid

Tip: The absolute best way to witness a superb flamenco performance by one of Spain's great dancers/singers, such as Estrella Morente, el Cigala, José Mercé, Sara Baras, Eva Yerbabuena, María Pagés, Rocío Molina, etc. is to attend one of the many yearly flamenco festivals held in Madrid or Jerez de la Frontera or every other year in Sevilla, or to see the major stars when they go on tour and present their stage shows in one of the city's major theaters.

Veranos de la Villa is the July-August outdoor performing arts festival with performances held at the Conde del Duque and Puente del Rey venues.

The **Suma Flamenca Festival** is held during the entire month of June with performances at all the major tablaos such as Casa Patas, Las Tablas, Las Carboneras, Villa Rosa, Cardamono and Café de Chinitas, plus the **Teatros del Canal**.

Flamenco Peñas

If you're a **hard-core** flamenco fan looking for a unique experience at a real, authentic flamenco bar, then venture to where flamenco artists hang out: **Candela**, at Calle Olmo, 2, in the Lavapiés district. Only go at night by taxi and very well accompanied! Flamenco performers sometimes give impromptu performances in the downstairs cellar, but usually by invitation only.

Jazz

The city's "best" jazz venue that is handiest for visitors is **Café Central** on the Plaza del Angel, number 10, just west of the NH Palacio de Tepa hotel and Plaza Santa Ana. Open until 2:30 am Sunday-Thursday and until 3:30 am on Friday and Saturday.

Another jazz venue in the Letras neighborhood is **Café Populart**, at Huertas, 22, with a low cover charge, 3€ Sunday-Thursday and 10€ Fridays, Saturdays and evenings. It features

jazz, blues, swing, Afro-American and salsa nightly, with shows from 10:00 pm until midnight.

El Junco, Plaza Santa Bárbara, 10, is known as the city's best for late night jazz. Jam sessions on Sundays (blues) and on Tuesdays (jazz). Open Tuesday-Thursday at 10:30 pm and on weekends from 11:00 pm to 6:00 am.

For old school jazz try **Café Berlin**, Calle Costanilla de los Ángeles, 20.

Classical Music, Symphony

Auditorio Nacional de Música, Príncipe de Vergara, 146, (metro: Cruz de Rayo). See the schedule for upcoming concerts of the **Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid**.

Spanish Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra (RTVE) performs its concerts at the **Teatro Monumental** at Calle Atocha, 65 in Old Madrid. Check the schedule for upcoming performances.

Fundación March, Castelló, 77, (metro: Núñez de Balboa) in the Salamanca quarter holds free chamber concerts on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm, Mondays/Saturdays/Sundays at noon, and also lectures, poetry readings important art exhibits. Seating is not assigned—first come, first served so arrive early.

Opera-Ballet-Modern Dance

Teatro Real, on the Plaza del Oriente (metro: Opera). Operas performed throughout the summer. The two major Spanish dance companies below perform both here and at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.

Ballet Nacional de España is wonderful and mixes classical ballet with flamenco. Not to be missed! They often perform at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, and tickets sell out extremely quickly.

Compañía Nacional de Danza of Nacho Duato performs modern works, usually at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.

Zarzuela, Spain's version of operetta is performed at the **Teatro de la Zarzuela** on Calle Jovellanos behind Parliament.

Teatros del Canal, at Cea Bermúdez, 1 (metro: Canal) is a new and vast multipurpose performing arts complex, occupying 35, 500 square meters of space, a creation of Santander architect Juan Navarro Baldeweg. It's currently a venue for modern dance, ballet, flamenco

(during the Summa Flamenco festival), rock and classical music concerts, even Portuguese fado.

Rock

Major international soloists, groups perform in the **Las Ventas bullring** or the **Barclay Card Center** (formerly the Palacio de Deportes), or the covered bullring, **Palacio de Vista Alegre**. You can buy tickets downstairs at FNAC on Calle Preciados or in the music department of El Corte Inglés in the Puerta del Sol, or the other El Corte Inglés branches. Check Madrid's Official Tourism website: www.esmadrid.com, for upcoming concerts before you leave and purchase your tickets at **Ticketmaster** Spain.

Dance Clubs

Because the clubs in vogue constitute a constantly changing scene, please see the recommendations in the most recent **Time Out Madrid** guide, or **check online**.

Craft Cocktails

Rooftop Views

For late night after dinner drinks - 11:00 pm to 2:00 am

El Dry*, the chic dry martini bar, a creation of master barman Javier de las Muelas, with an inviting and very comfortable outdoor terrace (but not rooftop), is in the Meliá Gran Fénix Hotel, at Plaza Colón, facing the Castellana Boulevard. We love to come here late at night during the hot summer months to sit on the terrace and nurse the city's best Gin Tonics. Although they go for 14,50€, it's the very best overall elegant gin bar in town, at least for Iberian Traveler.

The Roof, occupying the entire rooftop of the ME Melía Reina Victoria Hotel on Plaza de Santa Ana in Old Madrid, is an enormous chill out bar with gorgeous views of Old Madrid at night. If you plan to sit, you MUST reserve a table, particularly on weekends. Reserve a private cubicle outside rather than a spot at the inside bar. Open Sunday-Thursday until 1:30 am, 3:30 on Fridays and Saturdays.

Terraza Cibeles, facing Cibeles Square from the top (6th) floor of the gorgeously renovated Cibeles Palace, can be accessed by taking the elevator on your left upon entering the main entrance facing the Cibeles fountain. Open Sunday-Thursday from 1:00 p.m. until 2:00 am, and until 2:30 am on Friday and Saturday.

La Terraza del Urban is the rooftop chill-out bar/restaurant at the Hotel Urban, a few blocks away at Carrera San Jerónimo, across from Parliament (Las Cortes). Open in the summers only, Tuesday-Saturday until 3:00 am, 2:00 am on Sunday and Wednesday. Reservations required. Downstairs you'll find **The Glass Bar**, surrounded by glass, with furnishings designed by Philippe Starck; it is open until 3:00 am.

You'll find **Tartán Roof** at the top of the Círculo de Bellas Artes, Calle de Alcalá, 42, with entrance on the side street, Marqués de Riera. Opens only in the summer for dining (late May) and has some of the best views of the Madrid skyline. Check out the new menu. If you do not have a dinner reservation you will need to pay 4€ to enjoy the views.

And just up the street at Calle del Marqués de Casa Riera, 4, is **The Balcony Terrace**, the rooftop chill-out space of the NH Madrid Suecia Hotel. Take the panoramic elevator from the street for non-hotel guests. It's a two-level space, on the top floor, there's a bar and chill-out sofas with a balcony that offers some of the city's best views, and on the lower floor, the main bar and the pool. A D.J. spins tunes late into the night. It remains open until 1:00 am on Sunday to Wednesday and from Thursday to Saturday until 2:00 am.

Note: The hotel recently switched hands, from the Ininside Madrid Suecia by Melía to the NH, so policies on use of the terrace and hours may have changed. This summer (early June to late September) the hotel is scheduled to close for a complete renovation to become the 5-star NH Collection Cibeles.

El Ático de Las Letras is the top floor solarium of the Iberostar Las Letras Gran Vía. Serves beer, wine, juices and champagne at fairly decent prices. Open daily.

The newest hot spots in town for the fashion set are the rooftop **La Terraza Bar** at the 5-star boutique Hotel Principal, just off the Gran Vía at Marqués de Valdeiglesias, 1, open from June until late September, and the **Sky Lounge & Bar** at the top of the Hotel Indigo, Calle Silva, 6, with a teeny infinity pool, cocktails, Gran Vía views and chill out music on weekends until 2:30 am.

During those cold winter months

The three famed cocktail bars are on or behind the lower stretch of the Gran Vía. **Chicote**, Spain's oldest cocktail bar, is an Art Deco bar of Hemingway fame that attracted celebs like Ava Gardner and Grace Kelley in the fifties but has been completely redone for trendy urban hipsters-quite in fashion, popular with designers. The two latter bars draw an older crowd who sips gin tonics and martinis.

- **Museo Chicote**, Gran Vía, 12, open Monday-Thursday until 3:00 am, 3:30 am on weekends.
- **Bar Cock**, Calle de la Reina, 16, a former brothel, open daily until 3:00 am, 4:00 am in August.
- **Del Diego Cocktail Bar**, Calle de la Reina, 12, open Monday-Thursday until 3:00 am, Friday and Saturday until 3:30 am.

Madrid Lodging

How to choose your Madrid accommodations

If you'll be in the city for only a few short days and want to hit all the major sites easily on foot, including the "Big Three" art museums on the Museum Mile, I highly recommend that you choose a hotel in the section of 17th-century, Hapsburg Madrid known as the **Barrio de las Letras**, also referred to as **Huertas**, the "literary quarter", former home of the Golden Age writers such as Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca. This area is very handy to the museum triangle, walkable to the Puerta del Sol, the Plaza Mayor, the café-lined square, Plaza Santa Ana, tapas bars of La Latina and the Royal Palace/Royal Theater (Opera House). You will never need the metro or a bus for your major sightseeing. The most luxurious lodging in this neighborhood is the **NH Collection Palacio de Tepa**. Runner up is the **NH Collection Paseo del Prado**, across the plaza from the **Hotel Ritz**. Calle Prado has become "hotel and restaurant row" in this 'hood.

If you're a repeat visitor to the city, enjoy a quiet location and a sophisticated and elegant environment surrounded by beautiful turn-of-the-century architecture, with designer shopping and wouldn't even think of booking a Manhattan hotel not located in midtown East or the upper East Side, you may wish to choose lodgings in the posh *Salamanca* district. Or just a short walk away, choose a hotel directly on the Castellana Boulevard, above Plaza Colón. The **Adler**, **Unico**, **Meliá Gran Fénix**, **Villamagna**, **Hospes Puerta de Alcalá**, **Wellington**, **AC Recoletos** and **AC Palacio del Retiro** will fit this bill.

Or for far less money, but far fewer frills, the **One Shot Recoletos** with triples.

When you visit New York and insist on bedding down in the very heart of the theatre district, in the teeming Times Square-Broadway area, you'll be equally as happy at a hotel in the *Gran Vía-Puerta del Sol* area of town, with its constant, 24-hour stream of street life, fast food outlets, leaflet bearers, never-ending trail of tourists, cinemas, theaters and souvenir shops. Here consider the well run 4-star **Hotel Preciados** on quieter pedestrian Preciados street or the **Best Western Atlántico**, with adequate soundproofing right on the Gran Vía.

If you're a young, hip, urban dweller who likes to dive head first into the "action" and loves the downtown vibe and nightlife, you'll be very happy at any of the better contemporary Room Mate hotels **Alicia** and **Oscar**, the **Vincci Soho**, or the more expensive **Me Reina Victoria**, which sits directly on the always lively *Plaza de Santa Ana*. Or try the posh **Only You Hotel & Lounge** on hipster Calle Barquillo in the Chueca district.

No nonsense, practical, dedicated budgeters who want a functional, tidy, inexpensive, cheerful and handy hotel (rather than a hostel) might consider the **Ibis Styles Madrid**

Prado or the **One Shot**, both on Calle del Prado, the **Paseo del Arte** on Calle Atocha, or one of the **Chic and Basic** options. For slightly more money, consider the **Catalonia Plaza Mayor** or **Catalonia Atocha**, both on Calle Atocha.

Those on a **very tight budget** who do not require a full service hotel might consider one of the family run, comfortable *hostales* (not youth hostels but instead simple guest houses), such as **Hostal Adriano** or **Adría Santa Ana** (same owners), **Hostal Gonzalo**, **The Hat** (doubles + quad bunk beds), **Hostal Barrera**, **Hostal Bruña**, the **Artistic B&B** or others recommended in the Lonely Planet, Let's Go or Rough Guides.

About hostales: Most guest quarters now are equipped with wall-mounted, flat screen TVs, some have a/c and most all come with private baths. However do expect some paper-thin walls, lack of soundproofing, minuscule showers and tiny quarters, especially the single rooms.

Families with children staying for 3 or more days should consider one of **Spain Select's** fully equipped short-term rental **apartments** with full kitchens and washer/dryer.

Or opt for a fully serviced suite-hotel or Aparthotel with front desk, such as the **Luxury Suites**, **Exe Suites**, **Splendom Suites Gran Vía** or one of the two **Eric Vökel** Boutique Apartments.

Families needing a quad room in a more budget friendly hotel (for 200€ or less), should consider the quad room at the **Artrip** in *Lavapiés* (bunk beds, near the Museo Reina Sofía), the more upscale **Room Mate Laura**, tucked away from the Puerta del Sol, or one of the better reviewed **Petit Palace** hotels (some don't receive kudos), such as the **Petit Palace Santa Bárbara**, **Petit Palace Plaza de la Lealtad** or the **Petit Palace Savoy Alfonso XII**, that also has quad family rooms with bunk beds.

A single business traveler, or a couple staying for 4-7 days, and needing just a kitchenette, might consider the **Amador de los Ríos** or the **VP Jardín de Recoletos**, both full-service aparthotels within walking distance of the museum mile.

If you are an international business traveler in need of a smart, smooth-functioning, luxury business class hotel catering to executives, you can't go wrong with the **Westin Palace**, **Intercontinental Castellana**, **Hesperia Madrid**, the sumptuous **Villamagna**, or the **Meliá Gran Fénix**.

If you're a fan of the **Relais & Chateaux** group, Madrid's only member is the bijoux 5-star **Hotel Orfila**.

Readers of **Wallpaper** should like the contemporary design of the hotels **AC Palacio del Retiro**, **Hospes Madrid**, **Iberostar De las Letras**, **Indigo Gran Vía**, **Only You**, **Hotel Urso & Spa**, **The Principal** and **Radisson Blu Prado**.

Celebrities and aristocrats enjoy the privacy and intimacy of the **AC Santo Mauro** in the very attractive *Chamberí* district.

If you absolutely must have a pool for the sweltering months of July and August, consider the 5-star **Wellington** with its garden pool, 4-star **Indigo Gran Vía** or **Dear Madrid** with small rooftop pools, the soon-to-be 5-star **NH Collection Cibeles** (former Ininside Suecia) which will reopen in the fall of 2016 with a rooftop pool, or the 4-star **Radisson Blu** that offers an indoor spa-pool. While the Hotel Santo Domingo also sports a rooftop pool, the Booking.com guest reviews have been quite mixed.

If the *Ian Schrager* or *André Balazs* designed hotels that come with a hip and happening bar/club scene fit your personal style, you'll be happiest at the **ME Meliá Reina Victoria**, **Derby Urban** or **Only You**.

If only the very finest will do in a gorgeous location, and if you are a fan of the five-star service provided by Ritz-Carlton, Mandarin Oriental, Four Seasons, Sheraton Luxury Collection or Park Hyatt chains, you'll feel right at home at the **Villamagna** or **Hotel Ritz**, or perhaps at the larger, but much busier and less personal, **Westin Palace**.

Note: A Four Seasons is slated to open in 2017 at Plaza de Canalejas in the Centro Canalejas.

If you long for that *Grande Dame*, Old European Luxury hotel in the style of days gone by and love the romance and elegance of the **Orient Express** trains, look no further than the **Hotel Ritz** (no longer an Orient Express-now belonging to Mandarin Oriental). It's been home to royalty, A-list stars and world leaders for one hundred years, since 1910.

Recommended Hotels

Rather than offering, as usual, my own lengthy descriptions of recommended hotels, since information about each abounds with the hundreds of reviews posted on Trip Advisor and booking.com, the more reliable of the two in my opinion, here I simply provide a list of my tried-and-true, favorite Madrid accommodations, listed by price and in order of preference-where I would happily stay. And all receive ratings of at least 8.4 (“very good”) on Booking.com.

Dependable Hostales

For very low budget visitors in Las Letras district

- **Hostal Adriano and Adriá Santa Ana**
- **Hostal Gonzalo**
- **Hostal Barrera**
- **Hostal Bruña**
- **Hostal Alexis Madrid**
- **Hostal Atelier**
- **Diezmadrid**
- The Hat Madrid - *new family rooms with four bunk beds and a cool roof top terrace*

Well-Reviewed Hostel

Near the Royal Palace

- **Hostal Central Madrid**

Relatively cheap and mostly chic

Under 100€/night off-season

- **Exe Suites 33** - *in Chueca*
- **Room Mate Mario** - *near Royal Palace*
- **Room Mate Oscar** - *in Chueca*
- **Room Mate Laura** - *near Sol*
- **Artrip** - *in Lavapiés*
- **Chic and Basic Atocha** - *in Letras*

Affordable and Reliable 3-stars

In Las Letras

- **Ibis Styles Prado** - *good for families, has triples*
- **Room Mate Alicia**
- **One Shot 23 Prado**

Solid 4-star values

In Las Letras

- **Paseo del Arte**
- **Catalonia Las Cortes***
- **Catalonia Plaza Mayor**
- **Catalonia Puerta del Sol**
- **NH Colección Paseo del Prado***

Dependable, Stylish 4-star

In La Latina on the bustling Cava Baja, below the Plaza Mayor

- **Posada del León de Oro**
- **Posada del Dragón**

Highly Reliable

Nestled between Gran Vía & Sol

- **Preciados***

Super stylish 4-star

In trendy Chueca, with fashionable bar

- **Only You***

Designer 4-stars

On the Gran Vía

- **Iberostar De las Letras***
- **Dear Hotel Madrid** - *with dip pool*
- **Hotel Indigo Gran Vía** - *with infinity pool*
- **Boutique Hotel H10 Villa de la Reina**

New and smart designer 5-star

Off the Gran Vía

- **The Principal*** - a stylish and complete redo of the former Adna Palace, with stunning views from its rooftop terrace, bar, solarium

Favorite 4-stars

In the posh Salamanca quarter

- **AC Recoletos*** - a Marriott
- **TÓTEM*** - Marugal group hotel - opening in summer of 2016 in former space of Hesperia Hermosilla, and will be a member of SLH

Luxury 5-star

- **Mandarin Oriental Ritz*** - best location, Madrid's Grande Dame, to be renovated in 2017
- **NH Palacio de Tepa*** - charmingly renovated small palace on the Plaza Santa Ana
- **Meliá Gran Fénix*** - the Meliá chain's flagship, on the Plaza Colón
- **AC Santo Mauro** - in elegant Chamberí, discreet, in a former mansion, with indoor pool
- **Villamagna*** - best for the international business executive, on the Paseo de la Castellana
- **Unico*** - charmingly renovated 19th century mansion in the posh Salamanca district
- **Urso** - the prestigious Marugal group's first Madrid property, with spa, in Las Salesas
- **Wellington*** - distinguished, where bullfighters lodge during San Isidro, across from Retiro Park, garden pool
- **AC Palacio del Retiro** - Marriott's flagship Madrid former palace property
- **Westin Palace** - another Madrid Grande Dame, much larger and busier than Ritz
- **Me Meliá Victoria** - trendy and hip, on the Plaza Santa Ana with rooftop terrace
- **Derby Urban** - cool and hip, next to Parliament with rooftop terrace, dip pool and Glass Bar
- **Adler*** - Elegant, small and refined, in the posh Salamanca quarter
- **Intercontinental** - fine for the international business traveler, near American Embassy

On The Horizon

- In 2017, the Four Seasons will open its first hotel in Spain in the Plaza Canalejas project, a block from the Puerta del Sol.
- Coming in 2019, just across the street from the Four Seasons in the space now occupied by the Hotel Asturias, will be Spain's second W Hotel.

- *The NH Suecia (formerly Ininside Madrid Suecia by Meliá) will close in the summer of 2016 for a complete renovation to become the 5-star NH Collection Cibeles.*

Aparthotels or Fully Serviced Suites

That can accommodate a family of four

- **Luxury Suites Salamanca**
- **Eric Vökel Boutique Apartments**

Apartment Rentals

- **Spain-Select**

Airport Area Lodging

Hilton Madrid Airport - Madrid's only Hilton, it offers have king or twin bedrooms, 398 square feet in size, all with marble baths and floor to ceiling windows, plus the usual Hilton amenities, including wireless Internet access and plasma TV. The suites measure 743 square feet and have a separate living room, and guests in the suites have access to an executive lounge for complimentary continental breakfast and refreshments. Downstairs there is a bar and two dining venues, the fine-dining spot, Reserva, and a casual eatery, La Plaza, which provides breakfast, lunch and dinner service from 5:00 am until 11:00 pm. In addition the hotel offers an outdoor pool open from 8:00 am until 10:00 pm and fitness center with Turkish bath.

Tourist Passes, Madrid Card, VAT

Tourist Travel Pass

The Travel Pass (Billete Turístico) may be purchased at tourist offices, metro stations, tobacco shops (*Estancos*), and newspaper kiosks or online at [NeoExperience](#). You must present a passport number, and the pass is non-transferable. You can purchase for 1-2-3-5-7 calendar days.

- Zone 'A' pass offers free metro/bus transport within the city and to the airport.
- Zone 'T' includes Cercanías or suburban trains that you might take to El Escorial, Aranjuez or Alcalá de Henares.
- Zone 'A' one-day pass costs 8,40€; two days, 14,20€; three days, 18,40€; five days, 26,80€ and seven days, 35,40€.

Madrid Card

Offers free entry to 40+ museums, including the big three, Prado/Thyssen/Reina Sofía, plus the Royal Palace, Sorolla Museum, Railway Museum, Wax Museum, tour of Bernabeu soccer stadium and Las Ventas, the bullring. It also offers shopping and restaurant discounts at select locations (Botín, La Bola and Los Galayos), discounts for Flamenco shows (Casa Patas) and some dance clubs. The price for 24 hrs is 47€, 48 hrs is 60€, 72 hrs is 67€ and 120 hrs is 77€ (www.madridcard.com).

This may, or most likely **may not**, be a money saver for you, depending on the length of your stay and your sightseeing/museum/entertainment hopping pace.

Vat Refund

For those who live outside the European Union, you may recoup a portion of the VAT on items you've purchased, provided you've spent the minimum of **90,15€**. But to collect this refund, you must have the store's paper work stamped at a VAT refund desk at Madrid's Adolfo Suárez Barajas airport, and these purchases must be in your carry-on bag, available to the customs agent for possible inspection, rather than be packed in your checked luggage. Once the receipt has been stamped, it must be put back into the envelope provided by the store and mailed (no stamp required in Spain). The refund can take 4-6 weeks to appear on your credit card statement, so be patient. Or you can collect your refund, in cash, at the **Global Refund Counters**, found in the boarding areas in T1, T4 and T4S, after going through Passport Control.

Safety Concerns

- Watch your handbag/wallet with extreme caution when riding the metro and bus! The very best recourse is to wear a money belt/neck pouch so as not to worry. The most popular metro station for pickpockets are SOL and OPERA, and be aware of pickpockets on the crowded bus line 27, which travels the north-south Castellana Boulevard axis.
- When sightseeing **anywhere in Old Madrid**, please leave all valuables (tickets, passport, large sums of cash) in your hotel safe. For receiving a VAT refund at a shop, the clerks will request your passport number for the paperwork. A copy of the passport will do, or photo on your Smartphone will suffice.
- In public places always guard your personal belongings and luggage well, and never allow a “volunteer” on the metro to help you with your luggage.
- Be wary of suspiciously helpful gestures, such as the above, and unsolicited warnings regarding stains on your clothing or damage to your car. Also beware of distractions such as someone dropping his cell phone in front of you to get your attention while his accomplice behind you picks your pocket.
- You may wish to read the “What are some Safety Tips” article under “Top Questions about Spain” to the right of the Trip Advisor Spain Forum: www.tripadvisor.com/ShowForum-g187427-i42-Spain. Ditto to the “**safety and security**” issues thread of the madridman.com's [All Spain Message Board](#) to educate yourself regarding the latest schemes to separate you from your belongings.
- **Pickpockets abound** in the Gran Via-Calle Preciados-Puerta Del Sol area and at the Sunday morning flea market, El Rastro.
- Ignore any gypsy woman who approaches you with twigs of rosemary as a “gift”, or any young person with a clipboard pretending to take a survey. Simply walk away.

What is SATE?

Servicios de Atención al Turista Extranjero (SATE de Madrid) is the Foreign Tourist Assistance Services, a centrally located police department whose role is to offer foreign tourists visiting Madrid specialized help after falling victim to a crime. Assistance includes help with canceling credit cards, contacting embassies and consulates, contacting family members, assistance with reporting lost objects.

This office is located next to the Plaza de España at Calle Leganitos, 19, and is open daily from 9:00 am to midnight. Or call the 24-hour hotline: +34 915 488 537 / 915 488 008, English spoken once a person comes on the line.

Embassies & Tourist Information

For obtaining a new passport, if yours is stolen...

US Embassy

The American Citizen Services office (ACS) is located at Serrano, 75, in the Salamanca district. Plan on spending an entire morning here to secure a replacement passport, and try to be in line by 8:30 am. There is a machine inside the consular waiting room to obtain a passport size photo. Bring plenty of change with you. If you are one of the very first in line and already have your photo, the entire process can, on a good day, take just over two hours.

Tel: (+34) 915 872 200

Canadian Embassy

The embassy is now located at Torre Espacio, Paseo de la Castellana, 259D, in the north Madrid Business District (Begoña Metro stop).

Tel: (+34) 913 828 400

Tourist Information Center

Drop by the Tourist Information Center at Plaza Mayor, 27, to pick up maps, brochures or to check your email at the computers as you enter to your right, or visit the [official tourism website](#) and check out “*Discover Madrid*”.

The information center is open daily from 9:30 am to 8:30 pm. You’ll find other information centers at the Plaza Colón, Plaza Cibeles and at the Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport, Terminals 2 and 4.

Other Madrid Tourist Offices

- Tourism center on Plaza Colón, on the Castellana Boulevard
- Information kiosk at Plaza Cibeles
- Information kiosk at Plaza Callao
- Terminal T4 and T1 at Barajas airport

Guide Books - Web Resources

Most Useful Guidebooks

- Time Out Madrid
- Madrid Directions, by Rough Guides
- Lonely Planet Madrid City Guide
- Lonely Planet Madrid Encounter
- Rick Steve' Snapshot: Madrid & Toledo
- Cadogan's Madrid

Web Resources

On-line Maps, route checking & other useful information

- www.esmadrid.com - official tourist information page that offers a wealth of information- here you can find a list of processions and sacred music concerts during Holy Week, cultural events during the San Isidro fair, special activities and Nativity scene exhibits during the Christmas season, walking tours of Old Madrid, transportation info - an invaluable resource!
- www.madrid-tourist-guide.com
- www.madridalacarta.com - a comprehensive dining guide, in Spanish
- www.madridchow.com - a personal guide to dining, written by an expat, in English
- www.abc.es/especiales/guia-restaurantes - a very dependable restaurant guide, created by Madrid's foremost gourmet critic, in Spanish only
- www.nakedmadrid.com - a blog written by expats passionate about their adopted city
- www.timeout.com - the latest in sightseeing, dining, shopping, clubbing
- www.timeout.es - the Spanish version
- www.aena.es - For detailed information about Madrid's Barajas airport.
- www.adif.es - For detailed information concerning the two Madrid rail stations.
- www.renfe.com - For train schedules in Spain and to book tickets online.
- www.petrabax.com - Renfe's official US representative, transactions in USD.

Bus Schedules from Madrid To points north or south

- www.alsa.es
- www.movelia.es
- www.avanzabus.com
- www.jimenezdorado.com (for Madrid-Avila schedules)

For Reviews of My Recommend Hotels

- www.tripadvisor.com
- www.booking.com
- www.venere.com

Official Madrid Bank Holidays

- www.qppstudio.net - English
- www.seg-social.es - Spanish

Travel Planning Services

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