

POCKET ROUGH GUIDE

# MADRID

EXPERT ADVICE • INDEPENDENT REVIEWS  
BEST PLACES TO STAY, EAT, DRINK & SHOP





POCKET **ROUGH GUIDE**  
**MADRID**

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# MADRID

The sunniest, highest and liveliest capital city in Europe, Madrid has a lot to take pride in. Indeed, its inhabitants, the madrileños, are so proud of their city that they modestly declare “desde Madrid al Cielo”: that after Madrid there is only one remaining destination – Heaven. While their claim may be open to dispute, this compact, frenetic and fascinating city certainly has bags of appeal and its range of attractions has made it a deservedly popular short-break destination.

Palacio Real



King Felipe II plucked Madrid from provincial oblivion when he made it capital of the Spanish empire in 1561. The former garrison town enjoyed an initial Golden Age when literature and the arts flourished, but centuries of decline and political turmoil followed. However, with the death of the dictator Franco in 1975 and the return to democracy the city had a second burst of creativity, *La Movida madrileña*, an outpouring of hedonistic, highly innovative and creative forces embodied by film director Pedro Almodóvar. In recent years Madrid has undergone a major facelift, with the completion of state-of-the-art extensions to the leading museums, the redevelopment of the river area and the regeneration of some of the historic parts of the centre.

The vast majority of the millions of visitors make a beeline for the Prado, the Reina Sofía and the Thyssen-Bornemisza, three magnificent galleries that give the city a weighty claim to being the “European capital of art”. Of equal appeal to football fans is the presence of one of the world’s most glamorous and successful clubs, Real Madrid. Aside from these heavy hitters, there’s also a host of smaller museums, palaces and parks, not to mention some of



Flamenco

the best tapas, bars and nightlife in Spain.

Madrid’s short but eventful history has left behind a mosaic of traditions, cultures and cuisines, and you soon realize it’s the inhabitants who play a big part in the city’s appeal. Despite the morale-sapping economic crisis, *madrileños* still retain an almost insatiable appetite for enjoying themselves, whether it be hanging out in the cafés or on the summer terrazas, packing the lanes of the Rastro flea market, filling the restaurants or playing hard and late in the bars and clubs. The nightlife for which Madrid is

## When to visit

Traditionally, Madrid has a typical **continental climate**, cold and dry in winter, and hot and dry in summer. There are usually two rainy periods, in October/November and any time from late March to early May. With temperatures soaring to over 40°C in July and August, the best times to visit are generally **spring** and **autumn**, when the city is pleasantly warm. The short, sharp winter takes many visitors by surprise, but crisp, sunny days with clear blue skies compensate for the drop in temperature.

Although Madrid is increasingly falling into line with other European capitals, many places still shut down in **August** as its inhabitants head for the coast or countryside. Luckily for visitors, and those *madrileños* who choose to remain, sights and museums remain open and nightlife takes on a momentum of its own.



La Chata

## Best places for tapas

There is a vast array of bars in Madrid, serving up tasty tapas: take a stroll around Huertas, La Latina, Chueca and Malasaña and you will stumble on some of the best. A few of our favourites are: *Casa González* (p.60), *La Chata* (p.34), *El Tempranillo* (p.35), *Cervecería Cervantes* (p.77), *Txirimiri* (p.35), *Casa del Abuelo* (p.60) and *El Bocaíto* (p.87).

renowned is merely an extension of the *madriileño* character and the capital's inhabitants consider other European cities positively dull by comparison with their own. The city centre is a mix of bustling, labyrinthine streets and peaceful squares, punctuated by historic architectural reminders of the past. As with many of its

international counterparts, an influx of fast-food franchises and chain stores has challenged the once dominant local bars and shops, but in making the transition from provincial backwater to major European capital, Madrid has managed to preserve many key elements of its own stylish and quirky identity.

### The Retiro



# Where to...

## Shop

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Head for Gran Vía and Calle Preciados if you're looking for department and chain stores and for the streets around Plaza Mayor if you're on the hunt for traditional establishments. For fashion and designer labels, the smartest addresses are in Salamanca, but more alternative designers are in Malasaña and Chueca. Fans of street fashion will like the shops on C/Fuencarral. Most areas of the city have their own *mercados* (indoor food markets), many of which have been given a makeover, but for the classic *madrileño* shopping experience make your way to the flea market in the Rastro on a Sunday.

**OUR FAVOURITES:** Casa de Diego p.56. Cacao Sampaka p.83. Agatha Ruiz de la Prada p.96.

## Eat

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Eating out in Madrid is one of the highlights of any visit to the city. There's plenty to suit every pocket, from budget backstreet bars to high-class designer restaurants, and a bewildering range of cuisines encompassing tapas, traditional *madrileño* and Spanish regional dishes. Lunch is taken late, with few *madrileños* starting before 2pm, while dinner begins around 9pm. Opening hours can be flexible, with many bars and restaurants closing on Sunday evenings or Monday and for all or part of August. You should spend at least one evening sampling the tapas bars around Santa Ana/Huertas and La Latina. Chueca and Malasaña have some superb traditional bars and bright new restaurants, serving some of the most creative food in the city. The smarter district of Salamanca contains fewer bars of note, but some extremely good (and expensive) restaurants.

**OUR FAVOURITES:** Posada de la Villa p.33. La Barraca p.84. Txirimiri p.35.

## Drink

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Madrid is packed with a variety of bars, cafés and terrazas. In fact, they are a central feature of *madrileño* life and hanging out in bars is one of the best, and most pleasant, ways to get the feel of the city and its people. The areas bordering Puerta del Sol, in and around Cava Baja and Plaza Chueca are some of the liveliest, but you can stumble across a great bar in almost every street in the city centre.

**OUR FAVOURITES:** Almendro 13 p.33. Café el Espejo p.96. Taberna Àngel Sierra p.89.

## Party

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As you'd expect with a city whose inhabitants are known as the "gatos" (the cats), there's a huge variety of nightlife on offer in the Spanish capital. The mainstays of the Madrid scene are the *bares de copas*, which get going around 11pm and stay open till 2am. The flashier *discotecas* are rarely worth investigating until around 1 or 2am, although queues often build up quickly after this time. Alonso Martínez, Argüelles and Moncloa are student hangouts, Salamanca is for the wealthy and chic, while head for Malasaña and Chueca if you want to be at the cutting edge of trendiness. You'll find a more eclectic mix on offer in the streets around Sol and Santa Ana.

**OUR FAVOURITES:** Joy Madrid p.43. Kapital p.77. Las Carboneras p.35.

# Madrid at a glance

**Plaza de España and beyond p.100.** Swathes of parkland in Casa de Campo and Parque del Oeste provide respite from the bustling streets of the city centre and are home to landmarks of their own such as the zoo and the Parque de Atracciones.

**Palacio Real and Ópera p.36.** Centred around the monumental triangle of the Royal Palace, Almudena cathedral and opera house, this is one of the most elegant and alluring quarters of the city.

Parque del Oeste

Intercambiador de Príncipe Pío

Campo del Moro

PLAZA DE ESPAÑA

Catedral de la Almudena

MADRID DE LOS AUSTRIAS

San Francisco el Grande

**Madrid de los Austrias p.26.**

The historic core of Madrid and the most atmospheric part of the city, Madrid de los Austrias is the first stop to head for in the Spanish capital.

UNIVERSIDAD

Ministerio del Aire

Centro Cultural Conde Duque

Edificio España

Senado

Edificio Capitol

Teatro Real

ÓPERA

Plaza Mayor

Iglesia Colegiata de San Isidro

LA LÁTINA

RASTRO

Mercado Puerta de Toledo

MALASAÑA

Museo de Historia de Madrid

GRAN VÍA

SOL

Casa de Correos

SANTA ANA HUERTAS

LAVAPIÉS

EMBAJADORES

**Salamanca and Paseo de la Castellana**

**p.90.** Smart restaurants, corporate office blocks and designer stores line the streets of this elegant, upmarket district that borders the traffic-choked Paseo de la Castellana.

**Gran Vía, Chueca and Malasaña**

**p.78.** North of the monumental buildings and shopping outlets that line the Gran Vía lie the characterful *barrios* of Chueca and Malasaña.

**Sol, Santa Ana and Huertas**

**p.50.** The bustling heart of Madrid centred around the tourist magnet of Plaza de Santa Ana and Calle Huertas.

Biblioteca  
Nacional &  
Museo  
del Libro

SALAMANCA

Museo  
Arqueológico  
Nacional

Las Salesas  
Reales

CHUECA

Palacio de  
Buenavista

Palacio  
de Cibeles

RETIRO

**Paseo del Arte and Retiro**

**p.64.** Three world-class art galleries – the Prado, the Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Reina Sofía – all lie within a stone's throw of each other in this chic district that is also bordered by the delightful urban green space of the Retiro Park and the adjoining botanical gardens.

Museo  
del Prado

Parque del Retiro

LAS CORTES

**Rastro, Lavapiés and Embajadores**

**p.44.** Low on sights, but high on atmosphere and full of lively bars and restaurants, this is Madrid's most cosmopolitan neighbourhood.

Convento de  
Santa Isabel

Museo  
Reina Sofía

Antigua  
Estación  
de Atocha

ATOCHA

# 17 Things not to miss

It's not possible to see everything that Madrid has to offer in one trip – and we don't suggest you try. What follows is a selective taste of the city's highlights, from museums to best places to eat.



> **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza**

p.70

A superb collection of art put together by the Thyssen family and which acts as a marvellous complement to the Prado.

> **Tapas**

p.59 & p.33

For an authentic night out eating tapas, copy the locals and go bar-hopping in Huertas or La Latina.

< **Museo del Prado**

p.64

Quite simply one of the greatest art museums in the world.

✓ **Estadio Santiago Bernabéu**

p.94

The Galácticos may have gone, but this magnificent cathedral of football merits a visit, especially if you can enjoy a game.





### < Museo Reina Sofía

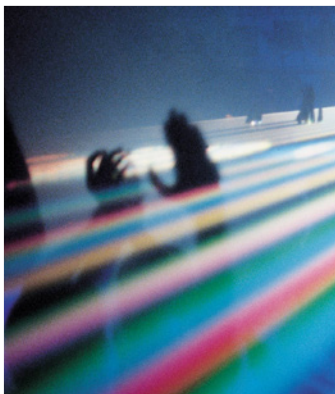
p.68

An essential stop on the Madrid art circuit, the Reina Sofía is home to Picasso's iconic masterpiece *Guernica*.

### ✓ Clubbing

p.7

Madrid has a massive range of clubs, from unpretentious *bares de copas* to serious cutting-edge dance venues.





< **Palacio Real**

p.36

A sumptuous royal palace reflecting the past glories of the Spanish monarchy.

∨ **Plaza Mayor**

p.26

Tucked in behind Calle Mayor, this stunning arcaded plaza is the beating heart of the old city with its cafés, bars, restaurants, buskers, caricaturists and mime artists.





< **Museo Arqueológico Nacional**

p.90

A formidable collection of Visigothic, Roman, Greek and Egyptian finds in a beautifully imposing refurbished building next to Plaza Colón.

✓ **Museo Sorolla**

p.91

The life and works of Spanish artist Joaquín Sorolla housed in his beautiful former residence.





## ^ **The Retiro**

**p.70**

This city-centre park has become *madriileños'* favourite playground with a boating lake, bandstands and a crystal palace housing regular exhibitions.

## > **Café culture**

**p.91**

Watch the world go by and get a proper cup of coffee at one of the city's traditional cafés.

