

# CITY GUIDE

## MADRID



► **Why Go Now:** Street art, avant-garde dining, and urban beschoigo are bringing a modern edge to Spain's elegant capital



The 2008 global financial crisis hit Madrid hard, and for years Spain's capital seemed to settle into its reputation as a cast-in-amber relic of bygone grandeur. But that just might have saved the magnificent metropolis from the overtourism woes of other European destinations.

Now Madrid has reemerged with fresh energy. Its barrios buzz with trendy new restaurants, pop-up design fairs draw arty crowds, and greening projects—including new bike paths—promise to make the city more accessible and enjoyable.

Manuela Carmena, Madrid's second

consecutive female mayor, even wrote a book about social change titled *Why Things Can Be Different*. It's one more sign of a city on the upswing.

But Madrid retains a respect for history. It may be the only city in the world where you can visit an ancient Egyptian temple, a crystal palace, and the world's oldest continuously operating restaurant in the same afternoon—all under a sun that shines 300 days a year.

—Eric Rosen

See "Brushstroke," a Roy Lichtenstein work, at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

## KNOW IT MADRID



Catch a classic film in the restored Cine Doré theater.

### Bohemian Barrio

An old neighborhood morphs into one of the city's newest hot spots

Established in the 16th century just beyond Madrid's medieval town walls, Lavapiés has a long history as an outlier. But now this multicultural neighborhood is gaining insider status. Immigrants from Africa and Asia, as well as young Spaniards drawn by the relatively cheap rents, have created a vibrant melting pot where travelers can find Senegalese restaurants, Arabic teahouses, and traditional tapas bars within blocks of one another. Colorful murals along the narrow, winding streets are the main attraction for graffiti tours like those given by **MADRID STREET ART PROJECT'S SAFARIS URBANOS**. A former tobacco factory has been transformed into a community center, **LA TABACALERA**, hosting exhibitions, lectures, and debates, while the **NATIONAL FILM INSTITUTE (FILMOTECA ESPAÑOLA)** offers screenings at the gorgeous 1923 **CINE DORÉ** movie theater. A burgeoning café culture includes institutions such as the 116-year-old art nouveau **CAFÉ BARBIERI** and trendier upstarts like **PLÁNTATE**. Either makes an excellent refueling stop before browsing the wares at Spain's largest flea market, **EL RASTRO**, on Sundays.

### Stellar Stays

- TRENDY
- NEW
- CLASSIC

#### ONLY YOU HOTEL ATOCHA

Located in an industrial-chic 19th-century building in the once gritty area near Madrid's central train station, this boutique hotel is a top choice for travelers in transit. Don't miss Sunday brunch or evening cocktails with city views at **Sép7ima**, the popular rooftop restaurant.

#### GRAN HOTEL INGLÉS

The original Gran Hotel Inglés dates to 1886, but its reincarnation debuted in 2018. The landmark property near the Puerta del Sol now features an art deco-inspired makeover by the architecture firm Rockwell Group. In its 48 rooms and suites, leather panels, bronze accents, and custom-designed fabrics give a luxe nod to an earlier era. Head to Restaurant **LOBO B** for Iberian ham croquettes paired with vermouth. There's also a glam bar, and the **Egoïste Spa** offers a "Jetlag Cure." Think jacuzzi, facial, and massage.

#### HOTEL RITZ MADRID

Undergoing a \$121 million renovation, this belle époque icon operated by Mandarin Oriental has hosted a wealth of celebrities over its 108-year history, including Ernest Hemingway, Salvador Dalí, and Ava Gardner. When it reopens in late 2019, expect a glass roof that brightens the heart of the hotel and a "Royal Suite" overlooking the Prado.

# EAT IT MADRID

## Buen Gusto

Tuck into tapas, yes, but sample cutting-edge creations too



## Tapas Time

**1** These savory snacks are a Madrid must, and at many bars they come free with a drink. **Asturianos** has been a neighborhood staple in Vallehermoso for more than 50 years, serving small plates such as potatoes with Cabrales cheese and sardines with tomatoes and olive oil. At **La Venecia** in the Barrio de las Letras, the sole sip is sherry. Pair it with salt-cured tuna. Campo Real olives, and Maroña almonds. For Basque-style pintxos, try **Juana La Loca** in lively La Latina, one of the city's oldest areas.

## Hunger Games

**2** Madrid's most exciting young chefs are reimagining Spanish cuisine. Thanks to David Muñoz's wildly creative dishes mixing Iberian and Asian influences, **DiverXO** has earned three Michelin stars. If you can't score a dinner reservation at **Ramón Freixa**, order the lunchtime "short menu" for seasonal specialties in the namesake chef's avant-garde preparations. A pop-up turned permanent, **Enklima** pleases palates with Agustín González's Nordic-inspired dishes on two tasting menus.

## Market Watch

**3** In this food-crazed city, markets rank as venerated landmarks. The most famous is the 1916 **Mercado San Miguel**, where stalls brim with produce and quintessentially Spanish fare like percebes (gooseneck barnacles). The modern **Mercado de San Antón** rises three stories and has a kitchen that will cook your purchases. Prepared dishes are the focus of the 20 vendors at **Mercado de San Ildefonso**, while **Platea** offers international tastes and live shows in a historic movie theater on Plaza de Colón.

## Edible Obsessions

**4** Spain's iconic flavors get their due in eateries that specialize in just one or two of them. Start your day like a local with hot chocolate and churros at **Chocolatería San Ginés**, which has been sweetening mornings since 1894. Then bite into the omelet-like *torrija española* at **Casa Dani** in the Salamanca neighborhood, or pick up some *jamón ibérico* at **Julián Becerro**, before popping into **Poncolet Cheese Bar** for its selection of Manchego and more than 150 other varieties.



In La Latina neighborhood, **El Viajero** serves tasty tapas on its rooftop (left).

## SEE IT MADRID



### Art Lovers

Those masterpieces you've admired in books or online? Many of them can be found in this city of museum marvels. Dating back nearly 200 years, the **Museo Nacional del Prado** displays works by Goya, Velázquez, and Bosch. Across the boulevard in Villahermosa Palace, the **Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza** features pieces by Rembrandt and Chagall. Picasso's "Guernica" stars at the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía**.



### Royal Trackers

The resplendence of Spain's monarchy endures today in ornate sites around the city. Visit the **Palacio Real Madrid**, Western Europe's largest functioning royal palace, which has its own notable art cache. Just outside Madrid, the **Palacio Real de El Pardo** sits in a beautiful forest. Day-trippers can explore the **Palacio Real de Aranjuez**, a baroque jewel box ringed by exquisite classical gardens, and the more monastic **El Escorial**, with its voluminous library.



### Savvy Shoppers

Though you'll find the international fashion brands here, Madrid is still home to indie shops filled with artisanal items. The 195-year-old boutique **Casa de Diego** peddles handmade fans, walking sticks, shawls, and umbrellas, while **Casa Hernanz** has been the source for handcrafted espadrilles (for both men and women) since 1845. Lay your hands on one-of-a-kind leather gloves at **Guantes Luque** or stop by **Taller Puntera** for more leather goods.



### Tree Huggers

Green spaces galore include the formerly royal **Parque del Buen Retiro**, featuring a rose garden and a lake with rentable rowboats. In the adjacent **Real Jardín Botánico**, some 30,000 plants thrive. Madrid's largest park, the **Casa de Campo**, draws visitors with a zoo, an amusement park, and an aerial cable car. The newer **Madrid Río Park** replaced a stretch of riverside highway with a cultural center, cafés, patios, and a summertime urban beach.

### Points of View

Whether your passion is Picasso, palaces, or parks, find it here



The goddess of victory presides over busy Gran Vía boulevard.

#### Go With Nat Geo

To book these new trips, visit [natgeotravel.com/explore](https://natgeotravel.com/explore)

#### ALL ABOUT ART

On the 11-day private expedition "Spain to Provence: In the Footsteps of Art's Modern Masters," travelers get insider intel during visits to Madrid's Prado, the Museu Picasso in Barcelona, and Cézanne's studio outside Aix-en-Provence.

#### FROM PLAZA TO SOUK

Fueled by tapas and tagines, the culturally curious explore Madrid's stately squares, the mazelike medina of Fez, and the breathtaking Alhambra in Granada on the 14-day "Southern Spain and Morocco" itinerary.