

MARIBEL'S GUIDE TO MADRID ©



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GUIDE BOOKS AND WEB RESOURCES

Most Useful Guidebooks

- **Time Out Madrid** - 8th Edition, '10
- **Madrid Directions**, by Rough Guides – 2nd Edition, '08
- **Lonely Planet Madrid City Guide** – 6th Edition, '10
- **Lonely Planet Madrid Encounter** – 2nd Edition, '10
- **Rick Steve' Snapshot: Madrid & Toledo**– 1st Edition, '10
- **Cadogan's Madrid** - 2nd Edition, for its historical notes.

WEB RESOURCES

Information on the web

- 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.gomadrid.com
- www.madrid-tourist-guide.com
- www.descubremadrid.com – official web for Madrid's Chamber of Commerce.
- www.guiadelocio.com - in Spanish (like a Pariscope).

The following are geared more toward a younger crowd traveling on a budget.

- www.madridman.com
- www.gomadrid.com
- www.madaboutmadrid.com
- www.notesfrommadrid.com

On-line Maps, route checking and other useful information

Metro maps and to calculate the best metro route from your starting point to destination (now has English version).

- www.metromadrid.es

For the best, quickest route from starting point to final destination via metro, bus or suburban train (under "Paths")-very handy!

- www.ctm-madrid.es

For detailed information about Madrid's Barajas airport: *how to arrive, destinations served, airlines, terminal maps, connections between terminals, left luggage facilities, restaurants, shops, accessibility, etc.*

- www.aena.es

For train schedules from Madrid to other cities and to book tickets online.

- www.renfe.com

For reviews of hotels not reviewed in this guide, or for further reviews of those that do appear here.

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

For bus schedules from Madrid to points north or south

- www.alsa.es
- www.movelia.es
- www.avanzabus.com

TRAVEL PLANNING SERVICES

Exclusive Travel Planning Services by Iberian Traveler & Maribel's Guides. Contact Maribel to arrange a custom itinerary for your trip to Spain, Portugal or southwest France...

USA Tel: 206.778.0127 / 206.364.6723

Madrid Holidays

January 1 - New Years Day
January 6 - Three Kings
March 19 – Saint Joseph's Day
April 1 - Maundy Thursday
April 2 - Good Friday
May 1 - Labor Day
May 15 – Saint Isidro's Day, Madrid's patron saint
June 3 – Corpus Christi
August 15 - Assumption of the Virgin
October 12 - Spain's National Fiesta
November 1 - All Saints Day
November 9 – Local holiday
December 6 – Constitution Day
December 8 – Immaculate Conception Day
December 25 – Christmas Day

For official bank holidays in the other autonomous communities:

English - www.qppstudio.net/publicolidays2010/spain.htm

Spanish - www.seg-social.es/Internet_1/Masinformacion/CalendarioLaboral/index.htm

ARRIVING IN MADRID BARAJAS AIRPORT

Terminals

The stunning Terminal 4 and its satellite terminal, designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect Richard Rogers, was opened to great critical acclaim in 2006. It's an extremely easy-on-the-eyes, light and airy, magnificent terminal that travelers seem to love, and 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 has an estimated time of 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 **One World Alliance** (www.oneworld.com), 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. High quality duty free shopping abounds here, with stores such as Caroline Herrera, Zara, Mango, Sibarium (for wonderful gourmet products), merchandise from Loewe, Hermes, Cartier, as well as decent coffee shops (Illy Café), sandwich shops (Rodilla) and places to dine on Iberian ham and wines by the glass (Vinea).

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 leave from T4, the main building rather than the satellite.

If you are flying on **Continental**, **US Airways**, **Delta** or other international carriers not members of One World, you will be landing at the far less attractive or comfortable **Terminal 1**, which is currently undergoing renovation. Also low-cost airlines, such as Spanair, Air Europa and Ryanair depart from T1 and T2. So if you arrive at T1 on a transcontinental Delta, US Air or Continental flight and need to connect to a Spanair, Air Europa or Ryanair internal flight, you will **not** need to take a transfer bus.

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 hr. shuttle bus (called *autobús lanzadera*) that runs every 3 minutes. The bus transfer itself takes about 10 minutes, as the new terminal is 4 kilometers away. The transfer runs 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 hour 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. The gates aren't announced until about 30 minutes before take off, as Aena wants passengers take full advantage of the plentiful duty free shopping. Remember that passengers must check in for an Iberia flight 45 minutes before the scheduled departure.

If you have arrived on an international carrier that is not a member of One World Alliance and thus need to recheck bags on an internal Iberia flight, please note that Iberia permits each passenger to check for free only one piece of luggage weighing no more than 23 kilos. Each additional checked bag costs €70 EUR. Iberia allows passengers only one carryon bag weighing no more than 10 kilos (however I've never seen Iberia employees enforce this weight limit).

TRANSPORTATION INTO THE CITY

To a City 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.

1. By Taxi - fares and surcharges

You'll find plenty of taxis waiting in their official line outside T4 and T1. While most taxi drivers are honest, unfortunately taxi scams do occur, although I have found them rare. The meter will start running with an initial charge of €2.05. This is the law. And from 10:00 pm – 6:00 am, Monday - Friday the initial charge is €2.20, upped to €3.20 on Saturday, Sunday and holidays (2010 tariffs).

Fares to downtown will vary, but from Terminal 1 the fare should not run much more than €27, and from T4, no more than €34, including the **€5.50** airport surcharge. There is an additional surcharge of **€6.70** on December 24 and 31 between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am.

If a taxi driver charges you €40+ to take you on a normal workday from the airport to your downtown hotel, he's taken you on a circuitous route, a joy ride. *My recent airport runs from the **Hotel Prado to T1** have run slightly over €24, including supplement, and runs to T4, have cost €31, including supplement.*

The ride takes less than **20** minutes in normal traffic; add an extra 10 minutes during rush hour. *A recent rush hour ride at 9:30 am from my downtown hotel to Terminal 1 took 23 minutes in very heavy traffic.*

Here are the **estimated** 2010 **taxi fares** from the airport to various downtown areas at 10:00 am taken from: www.worldtaximeter.com.

From Terminal 1

Puerta del Sol: €25	Plaza de Colón: €23	Plaza de España: €33
Atocha rail station: €22	Chamartín rail station: €25	

From Terminal 4

Puerta del Sol: €33	Plaza de Colón: €32	Plaza de España: €33
Atocha rail station: €23	Chamartín rail station: €32	

Before you pay your taxi fare, ask the driver for a *recibo oficial*, an official receipt. This will keep him honest.

Remember that there is a **€5.50** surcharge for all runs **both to and from** the airport, and a **€2.95** supplement **to/from** train and bus stations. So if you travel by taxi from Barajas airport to Atocha rail station, the taxi driver will add **two** supplements, totaling €8,45 to your fare.

Taxi Scams

There is NO SUPPLEMENT for bags carried in the trunk. It was eliminated January '02. If the driver attempts to charge you a supplement for each "bulto" (suitcase) carried in the trunk, tell him **No**, and firmly.

A common sly fare padding ploy among a few unscrupulous drivers at Atocha rail station is to charge unsuspecting riders a supplement of €5.50 rather than €2.95. And drivers at Atocha often refuse to carry a party of 4, declaring that their combined luggage will not fit in the trunk. This is not true and also illegal. Taxi drivers are not allowed to refuse a party of four, although some drivers at Atocha regularly do so.

Some taxi drivers at Barajas try to add a €5.50 supplement per person rather than per run. Please just be aware of these tricks, and point to the official and mandatory tariff sign prominently displayed on the back window of the taxi. Take a photo of this sign if needed as proof.

2. By Metro

The Madrid metro has a station at T4, called "**aeropuerto T4**" as well as T1-2-3. Metro rides to or from the airport, T1-2-3 or T4 require payment of a €1 supplement. Line 8 goes from Barajas airport only to Nuevos Ministerios. The ride takes 19 minutes. From Nuevos Ministerios you must transfer to another line to reach your downtown hotel, or you may need to make **two** transfers. From the international arrivals area of Terminal 1 to the metro station located between Terminals 2 and 3 is quite a long, 15-minute walk.

I recommend the metro transfer only for backpackers and the budget minded with a full hour to spare to reach a downtown hotel.

Metro fare is €2, €1 for single ticket plus the airport supplement of €1, or €6,70 for a 10-ride Metrobús ticket plus €1 supplement for each passenger using this ticket from the airport. This 10-ride Metrobús is useable on the city bus system as well. You can

purchase your metro ticket at the ticket booths or via the ticket machines, which dispense change. If you purchase a **10-ride Metrobús** from the machine, you must indicate how many passengers will be using this ticket from the airport, and each € 1 airport supplement will be added to the price. In other words, a couple at the airport will pay €8,70 for this 10-ride ticket while a single passenger will pay only € 7,70. If you anticipate using the metro/bus system frequently during your stay, the Metrobús will be a euro-saver for you. But don't carry it near your cell phone or loose change, as it will deactivate. The metro runs from 6:00 am until 1:30 am.

3. By express bus from airport to downtown Madrid

On November 5 EMT inaugurated a new express bus service from the airport (all terminals) to downtown, called **Exprés del aeropuerto**. The service runs 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year and costs only €2. From 6:00 am - midnight buses depart every 15 minutes; from midnight to 6 am they run every half hour and only go as far as Plaza de Cibeles, where passengers can connect to an EMT night (búho) bus to Atocha station. These new yellow buses run on natural gas, have bilingual signage and are equipped with Wi Fi and with luggage racks (but critics say not enough). The trip from the final stop at the airport to downtown should take **40** minutes, but plan on a longer ride during heavy rush hour traffic. The bus service makes stops at all airport terminals and then makes **3 stops** from the airport to downtown-the first at the O'Donnell metro in the Salamanca quarter, the 2nd at Cibeles square in the heart of downtown (handy to many hotels), and the final stop is Atocha rail station, handy for those departing on high-speed trains to the south or Barcelona or even for commuters arriving on a flight who take certain suburban trains home. The 10-ticket "metrobús" cannot be used on these new EMT airport express buses. Passengers purchase the €2 ticket directly from the driver.

4. By Aerocity 24-hour shuttle service

This regular shuttle service costs € 23 for up to three passengers (€26 at night/on weekends, holidays), €26/€28 for four, €41/€44 for five, €43/€47 for six. Guaranteed no more than three drop-offs on route. Prices include vat tax.

Express service, without intermediary stops, can be arranged for an additional fee, **but for 1-3 people will cost more than the normal taxi fare**. Cost of express service: 1-3 passengers for € 41 (€4 more for nights/weekends/holidays) or for 4-7 passengers for €46/€50. Book ahead at www.gomadrid.com/aerocity or call the number listed.

Please download the PDF file that explains this transfer system. Vans are blue. Some people prefer this to avoid being potentially overcharged by taxi drivers, but Aerocity prices have increased, there is a 1€ surcharge for extra luggage (each passenger is allowed 1 suitcase and 1 carry on bag), and I no longer find this service to be a money saver, except for a party of 6-7.

5. By private transfer

Le Tango Tours (www.letango.com) offers limousine service from the airport to your hotel for €55/person, far 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 to your hotel in style. There is a €20 surcharge for weekends and holidays.

Car rental at Barajas for travel to other regions

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 rates. We've had excellent service using the consolidator/wholesaler Auto Europe (www.autoeurope.com) or its sister company Kemwel, whose preferred Spain supplier is Europcar but will provide Avis cars upon request. The following multinational agencies have counters in both T1 and T4 of Barajas:

Hertz, Europcar, Avis and National/Atesa.

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 the taxi drivers don't start working until 2:00 am). There are well over 15,000 taxi drivers in the metropolitan area. The meter runs faster after 11:00 pm, and as mentioned above, there is a **€5.50** surcharge for airport runs and **€2.95** supplement for fares to or from train/bus station taxi ranks, also to or from the IFEMA congress center. There is an additional **€6.50** surcharge on December 24 and 31.

Tip up to 10% of the fare, but never, ever more. Spaniards simply round up, about a 5% tip.

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 until 3:00 am and then every hour from 3:00 – 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 €6,70, representing a significant savings off the cost of the individual tickets (€1 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 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 most newspaper kiosks, tobacconists, called *Estancos*, and at any metro station.

Metro

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



Entrance to the new Puerta del Sol Metro Station

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 www.ctm-madrid.es

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 € 1.30, 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 **8a** train to travel from Madrid to **El Escorial** departing from Sol or Chamartín, the **C-2, C-7, C-8a** or **C-8b** to **Alcalá de Henares**, departing from Sol or Atocha, or the **C-3** to **Aranjuez**, also departing from Sol or Atocha.

For train schedules see: www.renfe.com. 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.

Money saving (??) transportation card

Abono Transporte Turístico or **Tourist Travel Pass** may be purchased at tourist offices, metro stations, tobacco shops (*Estancos*), and newspaper kiosks. 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.
- 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 € 5,21; two days, € 78,80; three days, € 11, 60; five days, € 17,60 and seven days, € 23,60.

Purchase the Tourist Travel Pass at: www.neoturismo.com.

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 crowded bus line 27.
- When sightseeing **anywhere in Old Madrid**, please leave all valuables (tickets, passport, large sums of cash) in your hotel safe.
- 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.
- Please read the "**safety and security**" issues thread of the madridman.com forum 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 or any young person with a clipboard pretending to take a survey. Simply walk away, and briskly.

What is S.A.T.E.?

S.A.T.E. (Servicios de Atención al Turista Extranjero) 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 on Calle Leganitos, 19, and is open daily from 9:00 am - 10:00 pm. Or call the 24-hour hotline: 902 102 112, English spoken once a person comes on the line.

Embassys – for obtaining a new passport if yours is stolen

The US Embassy is located at Serrano, 75, in the Salamanca district, Tel: 915 872 200. 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.

The Canadian Embassy is at Nunez de Balboa, 35, also in the Salamanca district, Tel: 914 233 250.

Madrid Tourist Offices

- Main office at Plaza Mayor 27
- 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

MARIBEL'S SIGHTSEEING GUIDE

Sights that can be visited on Mondays

- Reina Sofía National Museum of Modern Art
- Royal Palace, Campo del Moro Gardens and Sabatini Gardens
- Almudena Cathedral
- Retiro Park
- Lázaro Galdiano Museum
- Royal Tapestry Factory Museum
- Caixa Forum
- Casa del Campo for amusement park/zoo/aquarium
- Fundación Mapre Sala de Recoletos
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Bull fighting Museum
- Bernabeu soccer stadium

Sights that children enjoy

- Parque de Atracciones (Amusement Park)
- Retiro Park's puppet theater
- Teleférico (cable car)
- Price Circus Theater
- Dreams Ice Palace
- Zoo-Aquarium
- 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

What's Free and When

Art

- **Prado Museum:** Tuesday - Saturday from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Sundays from 5:00 - 8:00 pm. Also on May 2 & 18, October 12, November 19 and December 6.
- **Reina Sofía Museum:** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 7:00 - 9:00 pm, Saturday from 2:30 - 9:00, Sunday from 10:00 - 2:30. Also free on April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6, and is free for children under 18 and EU citizens over 65, with proper identification.
- **Thyssen-Bornemiza:** Only free on May 18, International Museum Day.
- **San Antonio de la Florida Hermitage:** Tuesday - Friday from 9:30 - 8:00. Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 - 2:00.
- **Archaeology Museum:** Tuesday - Saturday from 9:30 - 8:00. Sundays and holidays from 9:30 - 3:00.

- **Templo de Debod:** Tuesday - Friday from 9:45 - 2:45 and 4:15 - 6:15. Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 – 2:00.
- **Lázaro Galdiano Museum:** Sunday from 10:00 – 4:30.
- **Sorolla Museum:** Sundays from 10:00 - 3:00.
- **San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts:** Wednesdays from 9:00 - 5:00.
- **Museum of Decorative Arts:** Thursdays from 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Sundays and holidays from 10:00 - 3:00.
- **Costume Museum:** Saturdays from 2:30 - 7:00. Sundays from 10:00 - 3:00.
- **The Americas Museum:** Sundays from 10:00 - 3:00.
- **Caixa Forum:** Always free.
- **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.

Music

Fundación Juan March - Free lunchtime concerts on Mondays at noon. First Monday of each month at 7:00 pm, Saturday concerts at noon.

TOP SIGHTS

The Golden Art Triangle, Art Walk or *Paseo del Arte*, 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** (always free).

One can buy a pass for admission to the big three, called the **Abono Paseo del Arte**, for €17,60, a savings of only €3,40. I have bought mine at the Reina Sofia 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 Sofia 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.

Individual Entrance Fees

- Prado: €8 at the door, €7 if purchased online; special exhibits cost €9.
- Thyssen: €8 for the permanent collection or €13 for a combo ticket of permanent collection + special exhibits (or €12, if purchased online)
- Reina Sofía: €6 for permanent collection and special exhibits.

“Money saving” (??) Museum/Sightseeing card

Madrid Card - Offering free entry to 40+ museums, including the big three, Prado/Thyssen/Reina Sofía, free ticket on Madrid Vision hop on/off bus, a tour of Bernabeu soccer stadium, guided city visits offered by the Madrid Tourist Board plus discounts on admission to the zoo, amusement park, ride on the cable car, discounts for dining (Old Madrid restaurants such as Café de la Opera, Schotis, Posada de la Villa, Botín, Cuevas de Luis Candelas, La Tapería, Taberna del Alabardero), flamenco tablaos (Casa Patas, Las Tablas, Café de Chinitas, Las Carboneras), dance clubs (Joy Eslava, Pachá, Kapital).

Price for one day, 24-hrs, is €58, 48 hours for €74 and 72 hours for €90.

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. You can purchase the card at the Municipal Tourist Office on the Plaza Mayor, or at the Madrid Comunidad tourist office on Duque de Medinaceli (behind the Hotel Palace), on any Madrid Vision bus, at the Madrid Vision kiosk in front of the Prado Museum, at the metro station at Barajas airport, at Chamartín or Atocha railway stations, and some travel agencies (Viajes Brújula) and at selected hotels, or buy on line to receive a 5% discount.

See: www.madridcard.com.



Tips for the Prado

To make your visit easier and entrance quicker, purchase your ticket **online** for a €1 discount (very important for special exhibits with a timed entrance) or a day or two before your visit at the **Goya Ticket Sales Point** outside the museum, at the northern edge, across from the Ritz hotel. On the day of your visit, you can also avoid a wait in line by purchasing your tickets at the self-service ticket machines near the Goya entrance. On the day of your visit, with advanced purchase ticket in hand, try to arrive slightly before 9:00 am and enter through the central **Velázquez door** in the original Villanueva building on the Paseo del Prado (lines are shorter here than at the Goya door).



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.

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** (known as 1st floor in Spain) 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 (floor 0) 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.**



On October 30, '07 a 22,000 square-meter, € 152 million annex designed by prize-winning Navarran architect **Rafael Moneo** was officially inaugurated. This wing added fifty per cent to the museum's total space, allowing the museum to exhibit some 500 more works from the permanent collection, constituting the largest expansion in the museum's history.

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.

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).

Again, audio guides are available in several languages for a fee of € 3.50 for the permanent collection/temporary exhibits or €5 for a combo.

And remember that visitors may now book online for both temporary exhibits and general admission (€7). Book your admission and even reserve your audioguide at: www.entradasprado.com.

And on the museum web site, you can download a pdf map of the museum to get acquainted with this vast space before your assault!

Prado opening hours:

Open Tuesday to Sunday 9:00 – 8:00 and 9:00 – 2:00 on December 24 & 31 and January 6. **Closed Mondays**, January 1, Good Friday, May 1 and December 25.

Prado admission:

- At box office, €8
- Online, €7
- Special exhibits + permanent collection, €9

Free on Tuesday - Saturday from 6:00 – 8:00 pm and Sunday from 5:00 - 8:00 pm, but one must enter by 7:30 pm. *I try to avoid the Sunday crush!*

The museum is also **free** on May 2 and 18, October 12, November 19 and December 6. It is **free** for children under 18 and EU citizens over 65 years old with proper identification (www.museoprado.es).

For a coffee or lunch break

The Café Prado is open from 9:00 am - 7:30 pm, and serves a daily set menu, 3-course lunch for €16. In the summer months, an outdoor café is set up at the Jerónimos door, which is open from 11:00 am - 8:30 pm. If you find the Café Prado just too busy, after your visit, you can cross the avenue to a nice and reasonably priced wine bar, **Bar Museo La Platería**, just cross the avenue, Paseo del Prado, to the Platerías square 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. (Very reasonably priced cocktails and digestifs are served at night). It also has an outdoor terrace. Open on weekends until 2:00 pm, and with an English menu available. Or also on the square you also have **La Tapería**, a friendly, “coffee shop” type of place where you can have tapas, a small plates meal or drinks.

If you're looking to lunch in a more sophisticated setting, the **Cask** restaurant of the **Hotel Radisson Blu Prado**, also in the square, serves a great value set menu for lunch during the week for only €15, served from 12:30-3:30 pm.

Tips for the Thyssen

This is often called a one-stop survey, a quick lesson in the history of Western Art from the 13th – 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. 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 (www.museothyssen.org).



A stunning 16-room annex opened in summer '04 to house 200 works of the Baroness Thyssen, Carmen Cervera’s personal private collection ranging from 17th – 20th century, which I find even more impressive than her late husband’s collection. This wing added 8,00 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. Informative English language audio guides rent for €3.

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, located on the top floor of the new annex with outdoor dining, open only in summer, which is quite fashionable and run by the Paradís group.

The Thyssen's special exhibits are housed in the exhibition space to your right after you enter. These temporary exhibits usually require a special timed ticket (timed in 15 minute intervals) which can be purchased online or at the ticket windows. Before entering the exhibit at your appointed time, you can rent an exhibit audioguide at the dedicated booth in the hallway.



Note: If a special exhibit is co-sponsored by the Fundación Caja Madrid, it will be displayed in two venues-half of the exhibit at the Thyssen and the other half at the Fundación Caja Madrid exhibit space on the Plaza San Martín in Old Madrid. Most visitors aren't aware of this show extension or that the second half of the show can be seen for free (no ticket required) at the Fundación. Don't miss the other half!

Thyssen opening hours:

- Open Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 am to 7:00 pm, except in July and August when it's open until 11:00 pm. On Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 the museum closes early at 3:00 pm. **Closed Mondays**, December 25, January 1 and May 1.

Thyssen admission:

- At box office: Permanent collection, €8. Special exhibits, €8. Permanent collection/special exhibit, €13.
- Online: Permanent collection, € 8. Special exhibits only, € 7. Permanent collection/special exhibit, €12. *I've never found it necessary to pre-purchase online.*
- Reduced admission for students, and seniors over 65, with proper identification.
- Free for children under 12.
- Free on May 18, International Museum Day.

Tips for the Reina Sofía

The Centro de Arte 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 (www.museoreinasofia.es).

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 20 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...).

No additional admission fee is required for special shows; all shows are included in the general admission price.

Reina Sofía opening hours:

- Open Mondays, and Wednesday - Saturday, from 10:00 - 9:00, Sunday from 10:00 - 2:30. In August and September the museum remains open until 11:00 pm. **Closed Tuesday.** Also **closed** on Jan. 1, Jan. 6, May 1, May 15, Nov. 9, Dec. 24, 25 and 31.

Reina Sofía admission:

- Permanent collection + temporary exhibits, €6. Temporary exhibits only, €3.
- **Free** on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 7:00 - 9:00 pm, Saturday from 2:30 - 9:00 pm and Sunday from 10:00 am - 2:30 pm.
- Also **free** April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

Note: In 2010 the Spanish Rail Network and the museum have a special offer, "Tren-Arte", which gives visitors a 50% discount off admission to the museum when they show their AVE or long distance rail ticket (the rail journey must be within 7 days of the museum visit). This promotion may be extended to 2011, but no info yet on the website.

Lunch after your visit-if you hunger calls after your heavy dose of Dalí, Picasso and Miró, and you'd like something more than a sandwich, more creative fare, you might walk up north a block to Calle Atocha to number 116, to **La Sede**, a very contemporary spot run by the owners of the nightclub Moma where you can dine on 20 different styles of cold or hot tapas (pintxos) or on inventive modern dishes or their daily bargain priced lunch menu. It's open continuously from 6:00 am until 1:00 am. No need to reserve. See the offerings at: www.lasede.es.

Or if you'd like to partake of tapas in a typical Madrid tavern atmosphere, head up Calle Santa Isabel to number 17 to **La Musa de Espronceda**, which is between the Reina Sofia 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 1:30-4:00 pm and in the evening from 9:00 until midnight.

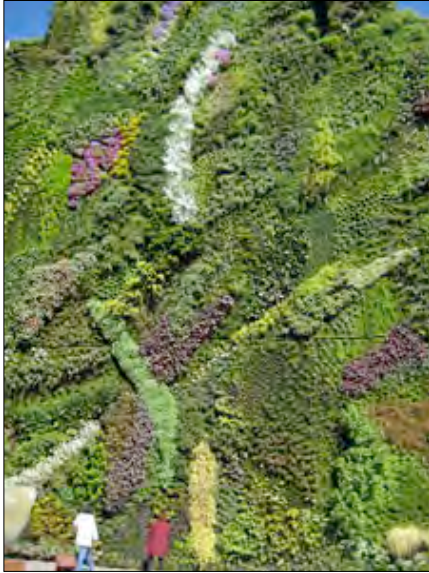
If you have picky **tweens/teens** in tow who only eat pizza or pasta (teens seem to love the Reina Sofia masterpieces, especially Dalí), you need only to head across the square to a branch of the popular and inexpensive Montecarlo based **Pinocchio Trattoria** chain at Sánchez Bustillo 5. Peruse the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

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. It represents yet another architecturally exciting addition to Madrid's Museum Mile. It was designed by the Swiss architects/ Pritzker Prizewinners Herzog & de Meuron, authors of the Tate Modern. 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**. In addition to its permanent collection and temporary exhibits (a recent one featured Dalí and Federico García Lorca) the center offers concerts, films and poetry recitals (www.lacaixa.es/obrasocial).

Tip: On the top floor the museum operates a bar-café open throughout the day. To the right is a dining area where a bargain menú del día is served on weekdays for €12 (there is a special menu for €20 on the weekends) - to the right you have a la carte dining.

Opening hours: Daily including holidays from 10:00 am - 8:00 pm. Admission: **Free**.

Fundación Mapfre Sala Recoletos

One of two temporary exhibit spaces of the Fundación Mapfre is housed in a 19th century palace on the Paseo de Recoletos, 23, just north of the Museo Thyssen, between the Plaza Cibeles and Plaza Colón (www.mapfre.com/fundacion/es/exposiciones/).

Its temporary exhibits feature painting from the years between 1880 and WWII. I have seen some compelling exhibits here since it opened in '08, such as a recent "Impressionism: a Renaissance", and admission is always **free** (so expect long lines).

Audio guides rent for €3. Open Mondays from 2:00 - 8:00; Tuesdays - Saturdays from 10:00 - 8:00; Sundays and holidays from 11:00 - 7:00.

EXPLORING 17TH CENTURY HAPSBURG MADRID

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 16th century. Over the centuries it has served as an outdoor meat market, a place for executions, a place where autos de fe 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. Have just a drink or coffee if you want to sit at one of the terraces and survey the scene. *The only exception to this rule - the Café-Restaurante María found at the northwest corner of the square, which serves gourmet cuisine, a considerable step above the rest.*



Plaza Mayor

You can follow the two walking tours, **Medieval Madrid** and **Castizo Madrid**, provided in the Fodor's Madrid guide or the Fodor's Madrid City Pack. They'll show you the area in depth and are quite informative. Also, Frommer's Barcelona, Madrid & Seville guide has a suggested walking tour of Hapsburg Madrid, or just follow this, my own little walking tour of *el Madrid de los Austrias*, similar to the one given by the tourist office in summer.

El Madrid de los Austrias

I suggest that you do this walk in the morning. Starting in the Plaza Mayor, walk through the arch on the southwestern side called the Arco de Cuchilleros where you'll find the touristy 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 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 to the **Plaza de Segovia Nueva** where you'll find the **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**. 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 - 2:00.

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 down south to the **Plaza Puerta de Moros**, the site of one of four gates to the medieval town, then down **Carrera de San Francisco** to the **Basilica 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), then go up, northwest on **San Buenaventura** to the **Plaza de Gabriel Miró** in the **Jardines de las Vistillas** where you'll see 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 Armoury.

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 beautiful square. 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 the pretty **Plaza de la Villa**. At 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** on to the **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**.



The new San Miguel Market



Palacio Real

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 €8 on your own, or €10 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 (www.patrimoni nacional.es).

Children enjoy the Royal Armoury (Armería Real) with its collection of 2000 weapons and suits of armor, and 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.

Palace opening hours:

- Open April thru September: Monday to Saturday, 9:00 – 6:00 and Sunday and holidays from 9:00 – 3:00.
- October thru March: open Monday to Saturday from 9:30 – 5:00 and Sunday and holidays (including Maundy Thursday, Good Friday) from 9:00 – 2:00.
- **Closed** January 1 and 6, May 1 and 15, August 15, October 12, November 9, and December 24, 25 and 31.

Note: Official closing dates change each year, so please check at www.patrimoni nacional.es for the 2011 closing dates when posted in January.

Palace admission:

- For the official Royal Rooms, Armory and Royal Pharmacy, €8 or €10 for the guided visit.

- For Royal Rooms + Painting Galleries, €11 for obligatory guided visit.
- For Painting Gallery only: €2, guided visit
- Reduced admission for children 5-16, students and EU citizens over 65
- **Free** on Wednesdays for EU citizens and always free for children 5 and under.

Changing of the Royal Guard

Every Wednesday from 11:00 – 2:00 a changing of the Royal Guard is held at the Prince's Gate. In full-dress uniform, replicas of the ones used during King Alfonso XIII's reign, 2 footguards and 2 mounted guards take their posts outside the Prince's Gate, accompanied by fifes and drums. Footguards are changed every half hour, while the mounted guards are changed every hour, but not at the same time as the foot guards.

But...**the first Wednesday of each month at noon**, a far more elaborate spectacle is celebrated, the *Solemn Changing of the Royal Guard*. 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 spectacle lasts for approximately 40 minutes, and bleachers are erected for 600 spectators, so get there early!



After a visit to the Royal Palace, or the spectacle of the Solemn Changing of the Royal Guard, head across Calle Bailén to one of Madrid's most emblematic taverns, the 100-year old **Anciano Rey de los Vinos**, founded in 1909. 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. (www.elancianoreydelosvinos.com)

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.

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, which was built in 1887 to house exotic plants and is now used for special (and 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**, or 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.



CAUTION: DO NOT STROLL ALONE THROUGH THE PARK AFTER DARK!

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 - 1:45 and again from 4:15 - 6:00 pm. Open Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 - 4:00, **closed** Mondays and holidays. **Free.**

WORTHWHILE SMALL MUSEUMS

Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales

At Plaza de las Descalzas near Puera del Sol, the monastery is housed in a palace which was a 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. Splendid Grand Staircase, Flemish tapestries and works by Titian, Bruegel and Zurbarán are 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 to be ushered in and another wait seated in the foyer for the group to form (www.patrimoniacionacional.es).

Opening Hours:

Open daily except Monday but with limited hours because it is still a “working” Franciscan convent. Tours are given Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10:30 - 12:30 and 4:00 – 5:30. Tours Fridays from 10:30 - 12:30 and on Sundays and holidays from 11:00 – 1:30. **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: €5 or purchase a convent combo ticket, Descalzas Reales + Convento de la Encarnación for €6.
- Reduced admission of €2 for children 5-16, EU citizens over 65 and students with proper identification. **Free** to EU citizens on Wednesdays.
- **Free** for all nationalities on May 18, International Museum Day.

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 (www.patrimoniacionacional.es).

Opening Hours:

Tours are given Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 10:30 - 12:45 pm, Friday from 10:30 - 12:45 and Sundays and holidays from 11:00 - 1:45. **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: €3,60 or €6 for convent combo, Encarnación + Descalzas Reales

- Reduced admission of €2 for children 5-16, EU citizens over 65 and students with proper identification. **Free** to EU citizens on Wednesdays.
- **Free** for all nationalities on May 18.

Note: Closing days for all the palaces, gardens, parks, monasteries and convents belonging to the Patrimonio Nacional change yearly. For 2011 closing dates for each monument, please check its home page on www.patrimonionacional.es in January.

Museo Sorolla *

At General Martínez Campos, 37, this wonderful small museum is the lovely studio/home of the Valencian born, 19th Spanish Impressionist, Joaquín Sorolla 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. 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 with a wonderful 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 Andalusian patio, along with his exquisite ceramic collection (www.museosorolla.mcu.es).

Opening Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday from 9:30 to 8:00 and on Sunday from 10:00 to 3:00 when it is **free**. **Closed Mondays** and on January 1, May 1, December 24, 25 & 31 and local holidays.

- Admission: €3. Free to those under 18 and EU citizens over 65.
- It is also **free** on May 18, October 12, and December 6.

Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando *

The museum is located at Alcalá, 13 (metro: Sevilla) on the premises of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, housed in an 18th century palace designed by Churriga. It 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 (<http://rabasf.insde.es>).

Opening Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday from 9:00 - 5:00, Sundays and holidays from 9:00 - 2:30. **Closed** January 1 and 6, May 1 and 30, December 24, 25 and 31 and local holidays.

- Admission, €5.
- Reduced admission, €2,50 for students with I.D. **Free** for those under 18, and EU citizens over 65.
- **Free** for all on Wednesdays, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

Museo Cerralbo (*temporarily closed for renovation*)

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 (<http://museocerralbo.mcu.es>). 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.

Opening Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday from 9:30 – 3:00 on Sundays from 10:00 – 3:00 during July and August. Entrance cost €2,40, but is free on Wednesdays and Sundays, plus May 18, July 8, October 12 and December 6. If you visit on Sunday morning, you'll have it virtually to yourself. **Closed** Mondays and on January 1, May 1, December 24, 25 & 31, plus local holidays.

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

La Ermita de San Antonio de la Florida *

The best way to reach this small neo-classical temple at Glorieta 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 (train 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 entombed (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!

Opening Hours:

Tuesday - Friday from 9:30 - 8:00. Open Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 - 2:00, shortened hours in August.

- **Admission is free.**

Museo del Traje

An exciting costume museum opened in '04 is in the former home of the Contemporary Art Museum on the Universidad Complutense campus at Avenida Juan de Herrera, 2, (museodeltraje.mcu.es). 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.



The museum also features an elegant gourmet, glass-enclosed restaurant, **Bokado**, with views of the gardens, delightful outdoor dining in summer and a very accomplished Basque chef, who offers a tasting menu paired with wine, *menú maridaje*, for €35. Restaurant is closed Sunday night and Monday. The bar/cafeteria section of the restaurant serves a great value *menú de trabajo* at lunch for only €20 and is open from 9:00 - 7:30 and 10:00 – 6:00 on Sundays (www.bokadogrupo.com).

Opening Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday from 9:30 - 7:00, Sundays and holidays from 10:00 - 3:00 pm. In July and August it remains open on Thursdays until 10:30 pm.

Closed Monday, January 1 and 6, May 1, November 9, December 24, 25 and 31.

- Admission, €3.
- **Free** on Saturday after 2:30 pm and Sundays.
- **Free** for those under 18 and over 65.
- Also **free** to all on April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

Metro: Ciudad Universitaria.

Museo de las Américas

At Avenida Reyes Católicos, 6, this museum 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 (museodeamerica.mcu.es). 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.

Opening Hours:

Open Tuesday - Saturday from 9:30 am - 3:00 pm, on Thursday afternoons from 4:00 pm-7:00 pm, and on Sundays and holidays from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, **closed** Mondays and January 1, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31 plus local holidays.

- Admission: €3.
- **Free** to those under 18 and over 65 and University students with I.D.
- **Free** to all on **Sundays**.

Metro: Moncloa

Lázaro Galdiano Foundation *

This museum is located in the Barrio de Salamanca neighborhood at the northern end of Calle Serrano, 122, near María de Molina (www.flg.es). It was reopened two 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. 700 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, Hieronymous Bosch, Constable, Gainsborough and Reynolds. It's often compared to NYC's Frick.

Opening Hours:

Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 - 4:30, **closed** Tuesdays.

- Admission: €4. **Free** for those over 60 and students with I.D. **Free** on **Sundays**.

Metro: Nuñez de Balboa.

Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas

Can be found on Calle Montalbán, 12, between Plaza Neptuno and Plaza Cibeles, just east of the Palacio de Comunicaciones-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 (mnartesdecorativas.mcu.es).

On the 1st floor (US 2nd) 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.

Opening Hours:

Open Tuesday - Saturday from 9:30 - 3:00 and Sundays and holidays from 10:00 - 3:00. **Closed** Mondays, January 1 and 6, May 1, December 24, 25, 31.

- Admission, €3.
- **Free on Sundays**, April 18, May 18, October 12 and December 6.

Museo Arqueológico (MAN) - *partially closed for renovation*

Entrance is at Calle Serrano, 13. Madrid's Archaeology Museum shares a neoclassical building with the National Library (Biblioteca Nacional) and is currently undergoing a thorough remodeling. Many rooms are closed to the public but those remaining open can be visited for free. Inside you'll find a replica of the Paleolithic caves of Altamira in Cantabria and La Dama de Elche, a bust of a 5th century B.C. Iberian noble lady, plus Visigothic votive crowns dating back to the 8th century. A temporary exhibit, "Treasures of the Museum of Archaeology" was created to take the permanent collection's place during the extensive renovation (man.mcu.es).

Opening Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday from 9:30 - 8:00, Sundays and holidays from 10:00 - 3:00. **Closed** Mondays, January 1 and 6, May 1, November 9, December 24, 25 and 31.

- Admission: Free

Museo del Ferrocarril (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 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 one of the elegant carriages (www.museodelferrocarril.org).

Opening Hours:

Tuesday – Sunday from 10:00 - 3:00. **Closed** Mondays and January 1 and 6, May 1, December 24, 25 and 31.

- Admission: €4.
- Reduced admission €3.50 for seniors over 65, students with I.D and children 4-12.
- Saturday admission: €1

Museo Naval (Naval Museum)

At Paseo del Prado 5, one block south of Plaza de Cibeles, housed on the first floor of the Spanish Navy Headquarters (www.armada.mde.es).

This 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.



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.

Opening Hours:

Tuesday-Sunday from 10:00 am-2:00 pm. On Saturdays and Sundays there are guided tours in Spanish (free) at 11:30 am. **Closed** Mondays, the month of August and January 1, May 15, July 16, October 12, November 9, December 24, 25 and 31.

- Admission: **Free** - but visitors must present passport or D.N.I. (for Spaniards).

Metro: Banco de España

GUIDED AND SELF-GUIDED TOURS

Do-it-yourself, on/off bus tour of city

Madrid Vision

You might like to take this 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. The entire route takes 1 hour 15 minutes. You can catch it at Gran Via, 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 several languages. Hop on and off as you please. MV runs two routes: Historic Madrid (red) and Modern Madrid (blue). Buses pass by

every 8 to 18 minutes, depending on the season. Tickets are available for one or for two consecutive days. There are no restrooms and soft drinks are not sold on the bus. See www.madridvision.es for current schedule and pricing. MV offers a discount for kids 7-16 and seniors over 65. Free for children under 7.

Hours of Operation:

March 21 to June 20, from 10:00 - 9:00. June 20 until September 20, from 9:30 to midnight. September 20 to December 20 from 10:00 - 9:00, and December 20th to March 20, from 10:00 - 7:00. Operates every day except January 1 and September 19.

Guided Walking Tours of Old Madrid

Official tourist office walking tours (and a few bike tours), called the **Discover Madrid** series, depart from the Municipal Tourist Information Office on the Plaza Mayor, 27, with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30 participants (20 for the bike tours). Price: €3,90, with discounts for those under 25, students, and those who purchase three or more tours. Free for children under 7. The price does not include monument entrance fees.

Currently there are nine different tours scheduled for '10, including "Essential Madrid" (runs daily), "Parks and Gardens by Bicycle", "The Marquis de Salamanca district", and "Madrid, Home to the Spanish Court". To see them all (and the offerings change seasonally), go to www.esmadrid.com, click on the English page, then **Specials**, then **Discover Madrid** at the bottom right. You'll see tours available month by month. Just click on a date of the month and you'll find what tours in English are available to you, the departure day, time and meeting point. Or you can download their bilingual pdf

brochure. Most English tours depart weekdays at 10 am and Sundays at noon, but there are others available in the afternoon, depending on the date. Or drop by the handy tourist office on the Plaza Mayor to pick up maps, brochures or to check your email at the computers as you enter to your right. **This should be your first stop**, in fact, when you arrive in the city. The tourist office is open from 9:30 am - 8:30 pm. You'll find another municipal tourist office at the Plaza Colón, but **most** Discover Madrid series tours depart from the Plaza Mayor; however, the "Marquis de Salamanca" tour departs from the tourism center on Colón Square in the Salamanca district.

Madrid-Museum-Tours* - For escorted art tours and day excursions, this well-regarded company offers high quality, personalized, private tours of Madrid's museums and monuments with officially licensed guides. M-M-T 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, and a tour of Madrid's most fascinating Monasteries, the Descalzas Reales and Encarnación, where the regular guided tours are usually only given in Spanish.

M-M-T also offers **tapas strolls** and **full day excursions**, lasting up to nine hours, by private car to El Escorial/Valley of the Fallen, Toledo and Segovia/Avila.

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* (anisettes) 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.

While prices do run steep for any privately escorted tour with 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 (www.madrid-museum-tours.org). 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 Grafitti Wall.

Walks of Spain Wine & Tapas Tours - For those who would like to be guided on a **tapas and wine tour** of Old Madrid, the friendly and engaging madrileño Andrés Jarabo offers a tour of Hapsburg Madrid with several stops at atmospheric taverns and wine bars in the evening. He has done tapas tours for the Travel Channel, has been recommended in the San Francisco Chronicle and is an expert on Spanish wines (www.walksofspain.com). I recommend this tour especially for single people who would like to enjoy the tapas ritual but yet hesitant to set off on their own. The price of €59

includes all tapas (enough to make a dinner), 5 glasses of wine and a printed guide with insider tips. The tour starts at 7:45 and lasts for 3 hours. It is held 5 nights a week; Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. One can reserve by sending an email on his website.

Adventurous Appetites - Yet another company offering a guided evening tapas tour of Old Madrid, lasting about 4 hours, starting at 8:00 pm from the Puerta del Sol, ending at midnight, daily, except Sunday. Groups are limited to 6 participants except during periods of heavy demand. Cost: €50, which includes the first drink and tapa. Pay as you go after the first *aperitivo* (www.adventurousappetites.com).

Segway tours - Meeting point is the Plaza de España (www.madsegs.com).

Self-Guided Tour of the Santiago Bernabéu soccer stadium - This is great fun for fútbol fans young and old alike. Tours are conducted daily except December 25, January 1 and game days when tours must end five hours before the match begins. Hours Monday - Saturday are from 10:00 - 7:30 and Sunday and /holidays from 10:30 - 6:30. 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. 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 cost €16 for adults and €11 for children under 14. Free for kids under 5. Free to those holding the Madrid Card. Details and online purchases at: www.realmadrid.com.

The Café Real 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 tour.

Organized Bus Tours for Day Excursions

Several bus companies offer organized excursions to Toledo, El Escorial/Valley of the Fallen, 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 included lengthy stopping at souvenir shops. Some include lunch (which I would definitely skip and go on my own). You book 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 the current offerings from the industry leader, **Trapsatur** (www.trapsatur.com). From the web page you can download their current brochure with prices.

- Avila/Segovia - Full day, with or without lunch, regular lunch or "gastronomic".
- El Escorial/Valle de los Caídos - Half day (except Monday).
- Toledo - Half or full day, 8-1/2 hrs, with or without lunch.

- Toledo/El Escorial/Valle de los Caídos (the church is temporarily closed) - Full day except on Mondays (far too much for one day, I believe).
- Córdoba - Full day via high-speed AVE train.
- Sevilla - Full day via AVE. Trips run daily except Sundays, departing 8:30 am.

I do not recommend the nightclub tour as it takes you to the mediocre flamenco club Torres Bermejas and to the floorshow venue of Florida Park, which I feel are both “has-beens” remaining from the Franco era, and you’ll most likely find yourself among tourists only. If you’d like to see a flamenco performance, you can easily and more cheaply go on your own to one of the city’s better *tablaos*, such as Casa Patas or El Corral de la Morería.

COVERED MARKETS

Mercado de la Paz - My preferred market in my favorite neighborhood is the Mercado de la Paz in the posh Salamanca district at the corner of Ayala and Lagasca. Here I shop for artisan breads, cheeses and hams at La Boulette, with several stands inside, and for more ham at José Alvarez, outside, who will hand slice and cryovac your order and for canned goods, *conservas*, at La Alacena. The best time to arrive is around noon. It will be filled with the well-heeled locals who only buy the very best. Also near the Chamartín rail station in the northern business district, **Mercado Chamartín** at Bolivia and Potosi has some of the city’s top purveyors if you find yourself in this northern business area.



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 artisan cheese to **La Fromagerie**; for pastries or a plate of churros head to **El Horno de San Onofre**. The market is open daily and keeps wide opening hours, from 10:00 am until midnight and on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays until 2:00 am (www.mercadodesanmiguel.es).



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. And also note that on late Sunday mornings, from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, it becomes extremely congested as locals gather here after the Rastro flea market ends to have a wine and a tapa before heading home for lunch.

THE FOUR MOST POPULAR DAY EXCURSIONS FROM MADRID

1. Toledo*

From Puerta de Atocha station, take the new high speed AVANT (a regional AVE), a 30-minute ride for the bargain price of €10 one-way, or €18 round trip. Check the current schedule at www.renfe.com. Please make sure to purchase your ticket **at least a few days in advance** or better still, **online** on the RENFE site. 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 on NYE weekend, 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 and four cars on each train, carrying 232 passengers. Car 1, next to the bar car, is called a Club Car but costs no more; it simply gives passengers a two and one seat configuration, thus a quieter ride.

For a full day tour I suggest that you depart on the Avant 08292 train at 9:20 am to reach the city slightly before monuments open at 10 am and that you return on the Avant 08173 at 5:30 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 7:30 pm on the Avant 08193. From the Toledo station, a beautiful Neo-mudéjar structure, the city bus 5 or 6 (fare: €0.95) or taxi (€5) 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.

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

2. 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 (coming soon), Córdoba, Sevilla and Málaga depart.



There are several different types of high speed trains on this route: the AVE Lanzadera (formerly known as the Avant), which travels between Madrid and Segovia, and the Talgo 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

AVE Lanzadera, with a flat one-way fare of €10 (like its Toledo cousin) or round trip fare of €18. The ride on the AVE Lanzadera is as smooth, comfortable and quick as the other trains, so if the AVE train schedule suits you, take it and save some euros.

I suggest that you depart on the 8:545 am AVE Lanzadera 08089 and return on the AVE Lanzadera 08168 at 4:07 pm or the 08188 at 6:20 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-**Guiomar** rather than Segovia, as the high speed trains go to the new Guiomar station. There are still slow (2 hr) Regional trains that run to Segovia's in-town station. See the Trip Advisor tutorial (www.tripadvisor.com) on how to purchase train tickets online.

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: €0.88), 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.**

3. El Escorial

By bus or by train...

The **Cercanías** train **C8A** (not C8), a double-decker, leaves from CHAMARTIN station (30 trains daily), for the 51-minute trip. See www.renfe.com, click on Cercanías, then Madrid. Fare runs €3.25 one-way. I take the 8:47 am run, arriving at El Escorial at 9:38 am, to arrive 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 city bus (fare: €1,10) which 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. **Closed Mondays.**

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 with guide and €8 without (€5 for those under 16 and EU seniors over 65). 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 cafes 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 to Madrid, to get back to the train station, take the Herranz city bus 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.

Or to reach El Escorial by bus...

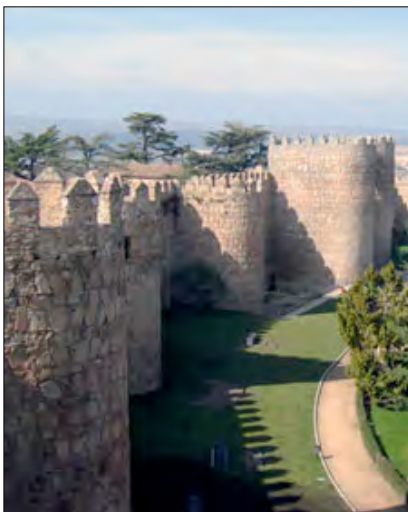
Autocares Herranz bus 661 and 664 depart starting at 7:00 am from dock **3** at the **Intercambiador de Autobuses** at the Moncloa metro stop (grey circular line 6). The ride takes about an hour and drops you off at the bus station in the upper town from where you can easily walk over to the Monastery. The bus seats are assigned. I take the 8:45 am or 9:15 am departure (or on Sundays the 8:45 am) to arrive before the hordes of tour buses. One-way fare cost €3.20.

For info about the town and the Monastery: www.sanlorenzoturismo.org.

4. Avila

By train or by bus...

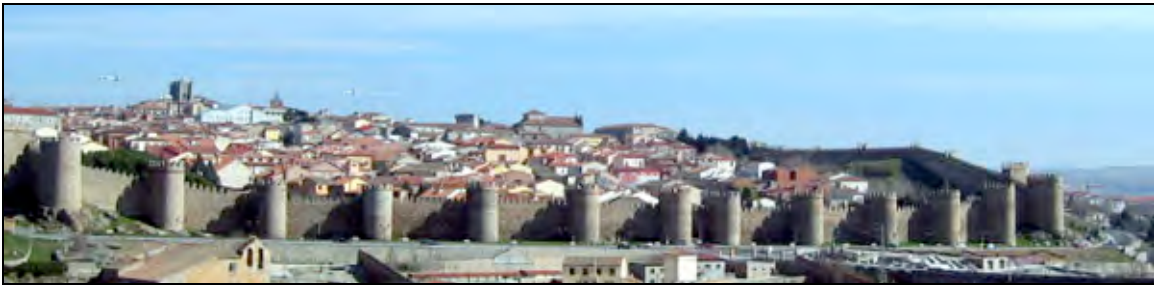
There are a dozen departures from **Chamartín** rail station everyday for Avila, and most are new and modern MD trains which make the trip in 90 minutes. There is currently an MD departing Chamartín station at 8:45 am, arriving at 10:07 am. After a leisurely lunch you could return on the 4:06 pm MD, arriving back in Madrid at 5:30 pm. Check www.renfe.com for the current schedule. The round trip fare runs around € 18. Take a taxi or a city bus (fare: €0.75) to the entrance of the walled city from the train station, which lies about a mile away.



If your hotel is close to Atocha, Recoletos, or Nuevos Ministerios, you can take the underground *Cercanías* suburban train (fare: € 1.30) that runs every 3 to 4 minutes between Atocha and Chamartín stations. The ride takes about 15 minutes (making intermediate stops at Recoletos and Nuevos Ministerios). Trains for Segovia, El Escorial and Avila all

depart from Chamartín. You can also reach Chamartín rail station in just 9 minutes by catching a Sol-Chamartín Cercanías train from the new, underground suburban transportation hub in the Puerta del Sol.

Autocares **Larrea** provides the bus service to Avila from the Estación Sur de Autobuses (metro-Méndez Alvaro). The ride takes around 90 minutes unless your trip coincides with the beginning or end of a bank holiday, resulting in traffic jams leaving or returning to the city. Currently there is a departure at 8:30 am, arriving in Avila at 9:55 and an afternoon return at 3:15 pm, returning to Madrid at 4:35. Round trip fare: about €17. See the current schedule at www.avanzabus.com



The walled city of Avila

OTHER DAY TRIP POSSIBILITIES

Sigüenza - On weekends, Madrid denizens venture to lovely, “off the beaten path” Sigüenza in the Guadalajara province. If you do venture here, you should go on a Saturday or Sunday when the town is far lively, 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 medieval fair.

Take the train from Chamartín station. Trip takes 1-1/2 hrs. There is a currently a late morning Regional express train departure at 10:30 am, arriving at 11:58 am and an afternoon return on the T.R.D. at 6:50 pm, arriving Madrid at 8:16 pm. Round trip fare: around €18. Renfe has inaugurated a full day medieval train ride/excursion on **Saturdays** only, **El Tren Medieval de Sigüenza** (*similar to the Strawberry Train to Aranjuez*) 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 a 10% dining discount at local restaurants.



The Medieval train usually runs from March to the first of July, with a summer hiatus and starts up again in September and runs until the end of November. This train departs from Madrid's **Chamartín** station Saturdays at 10:00 am, then departs from Sigüenza for the return run at 7:40 pm, arriving in Madrid at 9:00 pm (in the fall the trip returns to Madrid 1 ½ hours sooner). See www.renfe.com 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 all other seasonal Culture Trains, such as the Aranjuez Strawberry train and the Alcalá de Henares Cervantes train.

Aranjuez - The Spanish Versailles - Train C-3, a *Cercanías*, or commuter train, departs every 15 - 20 minutes Monday through Friday from Atocha station, but reduced service on weekends. Check renfe.com and on the English page, click on Cercanias then select Madrid.

For full day thematic excursion, Renfe runs the special 19th century steam engine "Strawberry Train", **El Tren de la Fresa**, which departs from the National Railway Museum at Paseo de las Delicias 61 (metro: Delicias) on Saturdays and Sundays. It runs from April to October, except for August when it goes on hiatus because of the intense summer heat. 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 (in Spanish only). Lunch is on your own. Last year it departed at 10:00 am and returned at 7:00 pm, but check first with the tourist office, or call (+34) 902 228 822 for times.

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.

Alcalá de Henares - Cervantes Birthplace - A UNESCO World Heritage Site - Take Cercanías (suburban) train C2, C7, C8A or C8B from Atocha. Trains depart every 15-20 minutes. See the current schedule at www.renfe.com. On the English home page, click on Cercanías to the left-then select Madrid. The ride to Alcalá takes 35 minutes. It's about a 10-minute walk to the town center. Alcalá has become a virtual suburb, a bedroom community of Madrid.

In the spring and fall the tourist bureau runs a special **Tren de Cervantes** (one of Renfe's Cultural Trains, similar to the Strawberry train to Aranjuez and Medieval train to Sigüenza) with costumed attendants who perform excerpts from Cervantes plays. Includes a guided tour of the major city monuments and visit to the house where the playwright/novelist was born. This special thematic train runs on Saturdays and Sundays only, departing Atocha station at 11:00 am and returning to Madrid at 7:30 pm. For more information about the city see: www.ayto-alcaladehenares.es.

Chinchón - A delightful, small town with a highly picturesque, porticoed, oval-shaped Plaza Mayor, where bullfights are still held in summer and which has been featured in many films. It also produces anisette, has several atmospheric taverns serving roast lamb and is a popular weekend destination for madrileños. It is located 45 kilometers southeast of the capital.

La Veloz bus 337 (it may say "Valdelaguna" on the front) 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. Don't get on an Agra bus on the right side of Ada. Mediterráneo. 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 pretty balconied Plaza Mayor.

See the bus schedule at: www.ciudad-chinchon.com.

There is **no train service** to Chinchón. You could also do a Madrid-Chinchón-Aranjuez-Madrid self-tour by bus-bus-train, but it's tricky, particularly on Saturdays and impossible on Sundays.

Salamanca - Auto Res express bus now operates from the Estación Sur de Autobuses on Méndez Alvaro, 83. Take grey circular metro line 6 to Méndez Alvaro station, located right below the bus terminal. *The Auto Res station at Conde de Casal is now closed.* The non-stop trip takes 2-1/2 hours and is quite a pleasant ride. The walk from the Salamanca bus station to the Plaza Mayor is long (15 - 20 minutes), but easy and interesting. Grab a map of the city at tourist desk in station, walk out the door and turn right. I always take the express bus to Salamanca. The one-way fare is €21.90. Check the current schedules at: www.avanzabus.com.

If you prefer to take the train, Renfe now operates modern MD trains on this route that depart from **Chamartín** rail station. The one-way fare is €19.25, and the ride takes 2 hours and 40 minutes. If you plan to travel to Salamanca on a busy holiday weekend, the train will be quicker than the bus, which may encounter heavy traffic jams leaving the city. See the current schedule at www.renfe.com

Cuenca - The city of the Hanging Houses and reknowned Museum of Abstract Art lies 168 kilometers southeast of Madrid. As as December 18, 2010, visitors will be able to reach this fascinating town much more easily, by **high-speed train**. The Madrid-Valencia AVE will make a stop in Cuenca ten times a day, making the smooth, comfortable ride from Madrid to Cuenca in only 55 minutes. The fares have yet to be established. Check departures times and tariffs at www.renfe.com. From the Cuenca train station in the new city, take local bus 1 or 2 to the Plaza Mayor to avoid the steep, uphill climb to the Old Quarter.

DAY SPAS – HEALTH CLUBS

Medina Mayrit Hammam* - At Calle Atocha, 14, in Old Madrid, this hammam, a member of the Grupo Andalucía (with sister hammams in Córdoba and Granada), offers bath, massages and aromatherapy by advanced reservation only. It offers 1-1/2 hr. bath, massage, aromatherapy treatment, or one can opt just for a bath. Spa times are every two hours beginning at 10:00 am in the morning, with the last one at midnight.

Or spend the afternoon and evening, with a full treatment plus dinner at La Colina de Almanzara restaurant along with belly dancing show. The message starts at 8:00 pm with dinner following at 10:0 pm. You can also spend the morning at the hamman with a bath followed by lunch. Their tea salon serves exotic teas, shakes, juices and Moroccan pastries and presents an oriental dance performance on Sat./Sun. at 6:30 pm.

I sometimes stop by the **Medina Mayrit** for lunch. From Monday - Friday the restaurant services a great value set two-course **menu** with drink, coffee or tea for only €12,90. Reserve dinner and spa treatments at: www.medinamayrit.com.

Caroli Health Club - This is the newest addition to the health club scene in the Salamanca quarter with a brand new state-of-the-art facility in the 5-star Hotel Wellington. Offers personal trainers, Pilates (www.carolihealthclub.es).

Fusiom - This Asian spa on Alcalá, 44, specializes in Thai, Balinese and Hawaiian massages at €80/hour. NY Times says: *“exotic rubdowns performed in sleek smoked-glass chambers combine pressure, kneading and stretching, sometimes with sweet almond and sesame oils”*. Also offers 75-minute long yoga sessions and an exotic array of beauty treatments, such as a coffee scrub or pineapple body wrap. Towels, slippers, bath tunics, cotton pajamas provided (www.fusiom.es).

MY FAVORITE SHOPPING HAUNTS

A note on shopping in Madrid - Shops usually open from 09:30 to 13:30 or 14:00, then reopen from 16:30 or 17:00 to 20:00 or 20:30, Monday to Friday. Most smaller shops and boutiques close for siesta, and some do not reopen on Saturday afternoon. The book-video-music store, **FNAC** (Calle Preciados) is open Mon.-Sat. from 10:00-21:30 and on Sundays from 11:00-21:00 and doesn't close during siesta. El Corte Inglés, and other mega-stores, are allowed by law to be open on only eight Sundays during the year.

For Virtually Everything Under The Sun

El Corte Inglés - 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 to Saturday, 10:00 to 10:00, and on eight specified Sundays during the year, when the hours change to 11:00 to 9:00. 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 y aperturas", it will give you the opening hours for all of the stores throughout Spain and Portugal.

The Serrano branch of **El Corte Inglés** handles mostly high-end merchandise and designer clothing/shoes and even has a basement supermarket and handy top floor cafetería (coffee shop).

When Shops are Closed - Find an **Open Cor**, a chain of convenience stores owned by El Corte Inglés, open 365 days a year, 18 hours a day. Look for the blue and orange façade. For those staying in the Salamanca quarter, the closest is located at Alcalá 108. For those staying in Old Madrid, you'll find one at Fuencarral, 118 (www.opencor.es).

FAVORITE SHOPPING DOWNTOWN

Ceramics

Antigua Casa de Talavera - Located at Isabel la Católica, 2, below the Hotel Santo Domingo (metro: Santo Domingo), this is a virtual treasure trove of ceramics run by brother and sister duo, both speak some English, who've been in business for 40 + yrs. I



make this my final stop on most every visit; jam packed with three rooms of ceramics from all the major ceramic producing regions, not only Talavera, although the focus here is on the lovely blue, white, rust and green Talavera patterns. You'll also find ceramics from Manises, Catalunya and Granada. You have to ring the bell to gain entrance. Closed for siesta. Very steep prices for the big items (10" plates are priced at €120 and up), but they are of very good quality. *However, prices are*

50% less in the village of Talavera in the Toledo province, if it happens to be on your touring route. They also have a good selection of smaller souvenir pieces and tiles, mostly Talavera and Puente de Arzobispo and some Granadino. 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, email: borca@infonegociocom

Capes - *Or just dreaming about someday buying that gorgeous cape to have in your closet, but never wear.*

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 the stars. 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 - Puerta del Sol, 12. This shop sells fans, walking sticks and umbrellas and has been in business since 1858. Come here to purchase the traditional Spanish ladies' fan. Princess Leitzia used one at her wedding.

Hats

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

Hand Embroidered Silk Shawls

Casa Jiménez - Preciados, 42, has been in the business since 1923 and is very reputable. 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. Also, El Corte Inglés has a nice selection which they put on sale in January and again during the July – August sales. Also **Gil** located at Carrera de San Gerónimo, 2.

Espadrilles

Antigua Casa Crespo - At 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 is among their list of customers. Sandals cost €6,50 and up, wedge-heeled espadrilles start at €27.

Casa Hernanz - Calle Toledo, 18, with its long wooden counter that dates back to the 19th century, owned by the same family for five generations. Both featured in the NY Times. Shoes made by hand and cost from €5,50 to €30. Open Monday - Friday from 9:00 - 1:30 and 4:30 – 8:00. Open Saturdays from 10:00 – 2:00.

Funky Wear *For the young and ultra hip*

- **Mercado de Fuencarral** - Fuencarral, 45
- **El Ganso** - Fuencarral, 2 (like a Ralph Lauren)
- **Divina Providencia** - Fuencarral, 42

Shoes

Camper, the casual shoe from Mallorca (www.camper.es).

- Downtown on Gran Vía, 54
- Off Gran Vía at Preciados, 2
- In all El Corte Inglés department stores

Designer Shoes at Outlet Prices

- **Caligae** - Augusto Figueroa, 18, in the Chueca district - sample sizes.
- **Salvador Bachiller** - sample shop on Plaza de Chueca, 8.

Books and Music

- **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. Open from 10:00 - 21:30, Monday - Saturday and on Sunday from 11:00 - 21:00. (www.fnac.es)
- **Casa Del Libro** - Gran Vía, 29, and nine more branches (www.casadellibro.com)

Travel Books and Maps – Gaztambide, 31 in Argüelles (www.altair.es)

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 (www.elflamecovive.com).
- **Flamenco World** - Huertas, 62 (www.flamenco-world.com).

Flamenco Guitars

- **Manuel Contreras González** - Calle Mayor, 80, below Puerta del Sol on the way to Opera.
- **Guitarras Manzanaro** - Santa Ana, 12 (www.guitarrasmanzanero.com).
- **José Ramírez** - Calle de la Paz, 8 (www.guitarrasramirez.com).

Flamenco shoes and dresses

- **Menkes** - Mesonero Romanos, 14. (www.menkes.es)
- **Yebra** - Luis Vélez de Guevara, 16. (www.yebraflamenco.com)
- **Maty** - 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. (www.maty.es).
- **Calzados de Arte** - Cabeza, 30. (www.taconesylunares.com).

Tailor to Royalty

Sastrería López Herbón - Calle Cedaceros, 9. Clients have included the King of Spain, Plácido Domingo and Oscar de la Renta.

Tailor Who Hand Sewes the Matadors Suits of Lights

Justo Algaba - Located at Calle La Paz, 4. This tailor has been supplying bullfighting equipment and making suits of lights for 25 years. 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. A matador will need five or six suits per season. Justo also rents suits to film crews, including the outfit worn by the female matador in Almodóvar's "Talk to Her" and to operas performing Carmen.

Sweets

Casa Mira - This shop, open since 1855, at Carrera de San Jerónimo, 30, is *the* place in the city to purchase *turrón*, 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. They are purveyors to the Royal Family.

La Violeta - At 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. 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.

Las Carboneras Convent (Monasterio de Corpus Christi) - Can be found at Plaza del Conde de Miranda, 3, around the corner from the Plaza de la Villa. It's commonly known as Las Carboneras because of the donation of an altarpiece of the Virgin, which was found in a coal warehouse. The Hieronymus nuns make sweets such as almond biscuits, *almendrados*, and the cloying sweet *tocinillo del cielo*, an egg yolk and sugar confection topped with caramel and orange sweets. To the right of the entrance, there's a small door with a call button. Ring and the door will open, go inside and order pastries at the *torno* (turnstile).

Pastries

Pastelería del Pozo - At Calle del Pozo, 8, near the Puerta del Sol, one block off Plaza Canalejas, is another classic Madrid institution, founded in 1830, that has "to die for" croissants, but don't go too early as they don't come out of the oven until about 10:00. Also puff pastry filled with custard, (*hojaldres*), *bayonesas* and for Epiphany, its *roscones de reyes*, ring-shaped cakes filled with glazed fruits. Closed Sunday afternoon and Monday.

El Riojano - At Calle Mayor, 10, between Puerta del Sol and Plaza de la Opera, right side. 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 it's founding. The shop has a beautiful interior décor of 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 - 5:00, Saturday afternoons and Sunday afternoons (www.confiteriaelriojano.com).

Horno la Santiaguesa - 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 with beautiful mahogany interior, is known for its Galician tartas de Santiago, its turnovers (*empadanas*) chocolates, mousses and breads. They ship their famous King Cakes to all parts of Europe. Open 8:00 - 9:00.

La Mallorquina - Located directly on the Puerta del Sol, this is an emblematic pastry shop, coffee bar and tea salon (upstairs) founded by a Mallorca family in 1948. The specialties here include Neopolitans (*napolitanas*), along with chocolate truffles, croissants, *bayonesas* 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 bollo preñado filled with chorizo. Open 9:00 - 9:15. Closed in August.

Chocolates

Valor - At Postigo de San Martín, 7, behind Plaza de San Martín is a great place to stop for hot chocolate after a visit to the Convento de las Descalzas Reales or the extension of a special Caja Madrid-Thyssen art exhibit at the Fundación Caja Madrid on the square.

Coffees

Cafés La Mexicana - At Preciados, 24, it holds the Guinness World Record for selling the most ground coffees in the world. It sells coffees from around the world-Kenia, Colombia, Java, etc. (www.lamexicana.es).

Iberian Ham

Artesanía Ibérica Jamón 10 - This is a new shop in the heart of the Barrio de las Letras area at Calle León, 10. It is a purveyor of the finest in jamón ibérico (the ham from the Iberian black hoofed pig), and it sells its ham wrapped and on little trays in small quantities (100 grams), hand-sliced for a great picnic lunch. Before you purchase look for the designations on each package - **I** for *ibérico* (from grain fed pigs), **R** stands for *recebo* (from pigs that are fed mostly grains/fodder and fattened up just before slaughter with acorn) and **B** for *bellota or the best* (completely acorn and herb fed).

Pick up their business card, which gives you a 10% discount on your purchase, or a voucher for a ham tapa and a glass of beer or red wine for €1,95.

Alma de Jamón - Is a brand new Iberian ham purveyor located on the tavern-lined Cava Baja at Lumber, 41.

Gondíaz - On the Plaza Marina Española, 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. Closed Saturday.

D.O.C.C. - Another new shop handily located for tourists on hotel row, at Calle del Prado, 28, Plaza de Las Cortes, directly across the street from the Hotel Villa Real. It also sells packaged Iberian ham and other gourmet products (cheeses, oils, foie) and has a coffee bar where we often have a quick breakfast of coffee, juice and tomato bread, or a mini ham sandwich (www.docc.es).

Cheeses

González - Calle León, 12, close to Jamón, 10, 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.

GOURMET FOOD ITEMS

El Club del Gourmet - Upstairs in the El Corte Inglés department store in the Puerta del Sol, or in their basement "supermercado" of any branch of a El Corte Inglés.

You can also pick up a few last minute items at the **Mallorca** shop at duty free Terminal 1 or the **Sibarium** shop in Terminal 4 at the airport.

Look for the following specialty items:

- *Olive oil: Duque de Baena, Dauro, Aubocassa, Abbae de Queiles, Anima Aurea, Carrizos, la Maja, Fuenroble, Marqués de Griñón*
- *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*
- *Canned berberechos and mussels: Los Peperetes*
- *Canned anchovies: Sanfilippo*
- *Honey: Miel de Romero Valmiel from Cuenca*
- *Vinegar: Vinagre de Jerez Domecq*
- *Red Piquillo peppers: Pimientos de Cristal El Navarrico*
- *Spanish paprika: Pimentón de La Vera Santo Domingo*
- *Saffron: Azafrán Princesa de Minaya*
- *Paella rice: Illa de Riu from Tarragona or La Bomba Calasparra from Murcia (Can be purchased in US at Williams Sonoma)*
- *Pyrenees cheeses: Roncal Larra (from Navarra) and Idiazábal Arántzazu (from Guipúzcoa, Basque Country)*
- *Sherry (finos): Tío Pepe by González Byass or La Ina by Domecq*
- *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 '07 from Alicante. It's divine! Or Chivite Colección 125 Vendimia Tardía 07.*
- *Cava, Spain's bubbly: Gramona III Lustrós Gran Reserva*

GASTRONOMIC SHOPPING TRIANGLE FOR SERIOUS FOODIES

In an area south of Plaza Santa Bárbara, between Plaza Colón and Plaza Alonso Martínez

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 in Spain (www.poncelet.es).

Try the **cabrales** (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** (another blue cheese from the Cantabrian side of Picos de Europa), **afuega'l pitu** (a fresh cheese spiked with paprika, also from Asturias), **taramundi** (cow's milk cheese from the Os Oscos mountain region of western Asturias), **torta del casar** or **torta de la serena** (a delicious, runny, raw ewe's milk cheese from Extremadura), **torta Montes de Toledo** (a goat's cheese from Castilla-La Mancha), **tetilla** (mild and soft, from Galicia), **grazalema** (Andalusian, blend of ewe's and goat's milk), **garrotxa** (a slightly nutty, goat's milk cheese with a blue grey mold from the volcanic region of Garrotxa in Catalunya) and **idiazábal** or **roncal** (ewe's milk cheeses from the Basque Country and Navarra). It also has a gourmet space reserved for the sale of foie, bread, marmalades, breads, crackers and a Vinoteca. The staff will guide you to the best and allow you to taste before you purchase. Open 11:00 – 9:00, Monday – Friday and Saturday from 10:30 – 8:30.



Viena Lacrem - Santa Brígida, 6, (perpendicular to Fuencarral) this shop opened in 1931 as Viena Labaguette. It's considered one of the best bread shops in the city. Breads come in all flavors-sesame, tomate, olive oil, beet, etc. The bakers make delicious buttery croissants as well.

Amaté - Argensola, 6, this is a shop selling 150 varieties of teas, of all aromas, along with tea accessories, kettles, cups, cookies, marmelades and syrups, even candles (www.amate.es).

Pomme Sucre** - On the corner of trendy Calles Barquillo and Fernando VI, this is a wonderful new Parisian bakery type spot, which serves the very most delicious almond croissants and *pain au chocolate* (€1.50) in town, along with gorgeous tartes and cakes to take away. Come in here after a morning of window-shopping in the hip neighborhood boutiques and sit down for a Nespresso coffee and a pastry. Terrific!

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. 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.



Window shopping at La Duquesita

Maison Blanche - Piamonte, 10, three blocks south of Argensola, at the corner of Barquillo, is yet another ultra modern gourmet shop selling kitchen wares, wines, cookbooks along with an all white restaurant offering light fare, coffee, teas or cocktails. Open from 10:00 am until midnight. On Saturdays it offers up live jazz from 2:30 - 4:30 pm. Closed Sunday afternoon.

Patrimonio Comunal Olivarero** - Mejía Lequerica, 1, on the corner of Hortaleza, one block south of Plaza Santa Bárbara offers an amazing selection of extra virgen oils from every D.O. in Spain, 150 labels. Reasonable prices. 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. Priced from €8,50-€14 (pco.es/usuario/portada.htm).

Hespen y Suárez - Barceló, 15, corner of Mejía Lequerica, further northwest, near the Tribunal metro, is an international deli where you can find New York style bagels, brownies, cheese and carrot cakes, muffins, cookies (owners are former New Yorkers), pick up some take-out of sushi or soups or have coffee and pastries at the bar. Open daily from 8:30 - 10:00 (www.hespenysuarez.com).

Cosmen y Keiless - On Plaza de las Salesas, a shop with eight more branches throughout the city, including in the markets, where one can buy American style cakes, cookies, brownies and cheesecakes (www.cosmenykeiless.com).

Cacao Sampaka - At 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 Ferran Adrià of Restaurant El Bulli. This is a chocoholic's paradise, selling 64 types of bon bons 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, a lunch menu for under €12, or just a drink or dessert (www.cacaosampaka.com).

Xocoa - Gravina, 3, six blocks below Orellana, is the Madrid outpost of the other hip Barcelona chocolate chain, a creation of the Escursell family chocolate makers. Here you'll find bonbons in very daring flavors such as thyme, green tea, cardamom and tequila. Also sells incense, votive candles, liquors and chocolate flavored beer! There is another shop in the Salamanca district at General Díaz Porlier, 15 (www.xocoa-bcn.com).

Plaisir Gourmet - Gravina, 1, is an international gourmet shop opened by a French couple selling teas and juices from around the world, cheese, sushi, foie, French baguettes, croissants and chocolates by Oriol Balaguer. Open 10:30 - 10:00. Closed Sunday (www.plaisirgourmet.com).

You can find another branch of this shop as well in the Salamanca district on General Díaz de Porlier at number 15 (near Goya metro).

Reserva y Cata - At Conde de Xiquena, 13, below the Plaza de las Salesas, is a solid chain of small wine shops, with a branch to the west of Paseo de Recoletos. They also bottle their own wines under a house label. Ezequiel Sánchez Mateos is the knowledgeable owner. Closed Saturday afternoon, Sunday and Monday (www.reservaycata.com).

FAVORITE SHOPPING IN THE POSH SALAMANCA DISTRICT

Wines - Enotecas

Lavinia – Ortega & Gasset, 16, between Serrano and Claudio Coello. Every month they have a special promotion on wines from a specific D.O. They have a huge selection of wines from all over the world, plus cava. It was originally the largest wine store in Europe, 1,200 square meters, with over 4,000 selections, until they opened a branch on Paris' Right Bank at Place de la Madeleine. Look for the “under 10 euros” bins, designated with a yellow ring, for great wines at a fine price. Wine prices at the duty free Aldeasa airport shops can run 15% less than in Madrid wine shops; however, the selection here is far greater and more varied. Upstairs is a tiny but well regarded restaurant, **Espacio Gastronómico**, open only for lunch from 1:30 - 4:30. No corkage fee. Store is open Monday - Saturday from 10:00 - 9:00 (www.lavinia.es).



Lavinia - Madrid

Iberian Ham

José Alvarez & La Boulette - Two stands in the **Mercado de la Paz** with entrance on Ayala, 28, where I buy my Iberian ham, hand-sliced and cryovaced. Open 8:30 - 8:30, closed Sunday. The ham (and cheese and bread) purveyor, **La Boulette**, is found inside the market with several stands. They sell their Iberian hams in small amounts, 200 grams, wrapped and on foil trays, handy for a picnic and often run 3 for the price of 2 specials. They're very well regarded for their cheese selections, offering more than 300 different labels. Closed Saturday afternoon and Sunday.



José Alvarez at Mercado de la Paz

Olive oils & more Wines, Sherries & Brandies

Mantequerías Bravo - At Ayala 24, between Claudio Coello and Lagasca, Very near the Mercado La Paz. One of Madrid's very best, most prestigious charcuterías, it not only sells the finest in cured meats but also cheeses, foies, mustards, coffees, oils and a stupendous selection of wine labels that are difficult to find in other stores. Even if you aren't in the market to buy a single food item, this wonderful classic shop is worth a stroll around.

Canned Goods (*Conservas*) - *Some of the world's best*

Degusto - At Ramón de la Cruz, 69 (metro-Lista), this is where to find Spain's most wonderful canned tuna belly (*ventresca*), mussels, sardines, *berberechos* (baby clams), anchovies, of the Don Bocarate brand and other prestigious labels, along with olive oils. (www.degusto.es)

Chocolates

Moulin Chocolat - At Alcalá, 77, near Velázquez and the Puerta de Alcalá, is not a chain like Cacao Sampaka or Xocoa but instead a unique two-story artisanal chocolate emporium. The owner, Ricardo Martínez, is the chocolate maker, and his preservative-free creations are French rather than Belgian inspired. He also bakes brioches and croissants and makes ice creams. Closed Monday. (www.moulinchocolat.com)

Santa - At Serrano, 56, is a diminutive, turn-of-the-century shop that sells 60 different types of chocolates and maroon glaze, including *leña vieja*, a trunk-shaped chocolate. Evita Perón purchased her *lenguas de gato* here. Their beautiful boxes make exquisite gifts.

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

Petit Plaisir - At Castelló, 12, near Calle Alcalá, this shop, open only Mon.-Fri. produces Belgian style chocolates molded in the shapes of flowers, spoons, golf balls, horses, etc. Some are filled with Baileys, champagne, and some are sweet and savory, spiced with curry, pepper or cloves (www.petitplaisir.com).

Oriol Balaguer - Located at Ortega & Gasset, 44, at the corner of General Pardiñas, is the eponymous Madrid outpost of revolutionary catalán pastry chef extraordinaire, Oriol Balaguer, anointed “the best pastry chef in the world” and “the architect of chocolate”. It gives a new name to the term “designer pastries”, as his creations look like precious little jewels, and the store window of this boutique is more reminiscent of a very exclusive jeweler or interior design studio than chocolate/pastry shop. If Cacao Sampaka is the Tiffany of chocolate shops, OB is the Cartier or perhaps the Chopard. We hiked up here, past the Plaza Marqués de Salamanca, for a peek on the inaugural day just as the store window was being decorated and just as the croissants had come out of the oven. One doesn't wander around here at whim, as it's a tiny place with a very avant-garde, rather futuristic design and no counter per se. Just as in Paris, stylishly frocked sales clerks (with that Cartier look) wait on customers and patiently explain the exotic ingredients of each of the jewel-like treats. We opted for the crunch-filled white chocolate golf balls costing 3 euros each, which made great gifts (www.oriolbalaguer.com/).

Pastries

Harina - An all white, airy space (“harina” =flour) in a terrific location on the Plaza de la Independencia (Puerta de Alcalá), this is where the well-heeled locals purchase their artisan breads, made with organic flours, pastries, take away sandwiches or come for breakfast, a light lunch 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. This makes a handy, delicious and affordable breakfast stop for those lodged at the Hospes, Wellington, Adler or AC Retiro Hotels (<http://harinamadrid.com>).

Espadrilles (*alpargatas*)

Cristina Castañer - At Claudio Coello 51. She 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 (www.castaner.com).

Shoes

- **Acosta** – Hermosilla, 36, right above Serrano; also Claudio Coello #21) Great handbags too, more practical and less pricey than Loewe. Classic.
- **Charles Jourdan** - Hermosilla, 12

- **Camper** - Ayala, 13, or Serrano, 24.
- **Mephisto** – Calzados Bravo at Goya, 43.
- **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.
- **Sara Navarro** - Jorge Juan, 22.
- **Todd's** - located on the left side of Ortega & Gasset, 17, heading up from Serrano, with shoes priced slightly lower than in the U.S.
- **Jaime Mascaró** – on Hermosilla, 22, corner of Claudio Coello. Sells cute, cute, cute ballet slippers a la Chanel. Designer hails from Menorca. He has two stores in NYC.
- **Manolo Blahnik** - Serrano, 58 (interior)

Leather Gloves

- **Guantes Varadé** - Serrano, 54

Silver Jewelry

- **Zhoa** – General Díaz Porlier, 19

High Fashion Jewelry

- **Carrera y Carrera** - Serrano, 76

Handbags

- **Longchamp** - Calle Serrano between Loewe and Mallorca. Prices are identical to Paris. El Corte Inglés, Serrano branch, also carries Longchamp.
- **Acosta** - Two stores, Hermosilla, 36, above Serrano and at Claudio Coello, 21. Gorgeous, buttery leather bags, much cheaper than Loewe. Classic styles.
- **Salvador Bachiller** - Velázquez, 24.

Lingerie

- **!Ay qué luna!** - Ayala, 32
- **3AB** – Don Ramón de la Cruz, 29
- **3 en Claudio** – Claudio Coello, 47
- **Women's Secret** – Serrano, 29

Wedding and evening gowns

- **Pronovias** - Spain's most elegant wedding gown chain, Barcelona based, (with a US store now in Manhattan on 51st) has its Madrid flagship store on Velázquez, across from the Gran Hotel (www.pronovias.com).
- **Rosa Clará** - Simply stunning creations by Barcelona designer, Rosa Clará, who has dressed the likes of Mischa Barton and Paulina Rubio. You'll find her

Madrid flagship shop also on posh Velázquez, at the corner of Ayala (www.rosaclaras.es).

Leather

- **Loewe** - With stores on Serrano, 26, the Gran Vía, Palace hotel and branches all over Spain, with 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 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, at about 140€ each, but be sure to ask for a VAT refund form when you shop (passport required).

Soaps

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

Perfumes/Colognes

- **Adolfo Domínguez** plus **Agus 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 and exquisite men's cologne/after shave.
- Purchase at El Corte Inglés or the wonderfully atmospheric **Perfumería Alvarez Gómez** on Serrano, 14, or any discount perfumeria.

Make-up

- **Massumeh Massi** - Monte Esquinza, 37. Where Penelope Cruz buys her beauty products (www.massumeh.com).

Majorca Pearls

I always purchase these faux pearls for friends at any branch of **El Corte Inglés**. They sell them in white, cream, grayish blue, dark grey. Much cheaper than purchasing them in the USA at the Neiman Marcus stores. They stand behind their merchandise, "not satisfied, we'll refund your money". They have multilingual salespeople upon request, and the procedure for your VAT refund is a snap. Most people go to the El Corte Inglés branch at **Sol**, but I prefer the one on **Goya** (Goya metro). Or better still to avoid the teeming masses, go to the small, classier boutique El Corte Inglés on **Serrano**, behind the Hotel Villamagna, which has a VAT refund desk downstairs that's never crowded. Just save your receipts, take your passport, and when you hit a total of €90, go to the "Atención al cliente" desk. If you've paid by credit card, your card will be credited.

SPANISH FASHIONS

For those with a clothing budget larger than my own, the top Spanish designers are:

- **Adolfo Domínguez** - The Armani of Spain, invented the slogan “la arruga es bella” (the crease is beautiful) who has boutiques at Serrano, 18, and Ortega y Gasset, 3.
- **Roberto Verino** - Spain's Armani jr. has a new boutique on corner of Jorge Juan and Claudio Coello and also on Serrano at the corner of Ayala, next to Bally.
- **Purificación García** - Serrano, 28.
- **Amaya Arzuaga** - Lagasca, 50
- **Elio Berhanyer** -Lagasca, 65
- **Victorio & Lucchino** - Lagasca, 75
- **Lydia Delgado** - Hermosilla, 49.
- **Javier Larrainzar** – Castelló, 16.
- **Antonio Pernas** - Claudio Coello, 46.
- **Kina Fernández** - Claudio Coello, 75
- **Armando Bassi** - At corner of Claudio Coello and Ayala.
- **Felipe Varela** - Ortega & Gasset, 30-favorite of Princess Letizia
- **Josep Font** - Don Ramón de la Cruz, 51
- **Ana Mirat** - Serrano, 22
- **Pedro del Hierro** - Serrano, 24

For smart, high quality sportswear in a kind of a preppy, Ralph Lauren, or Façonnable look, the shops of **Massimo Dutti** with branches all over Spain, a company which hails from Catalunya. In the Salamanca district there's a branch at Goya, 73 (www.massimodutti.com).

Another wildly popular clothing line is **Hakei**, with stores in San Sebastián, Pamplona, Bilbao, Barcelona, Madrid and Málaga, offering casual, comfortable but hip items in neutral colors of grey, buff, taupe, along with bags, shoes, boots and belts-all at popular prices. It has two branches in Salamanca, at Ayala, 34 and Goya, 41 (www.hakei.com).

For those who are young, with a limited clothing budget, go to any branch of **Zara**, a kind of Spanish low priced combo of Ann Taylor, or Gap, or J. Crew, with copycat versions of designer fashions. Stores are found throughout the city with a huge branch at Gran Vía, 32 and Preciados, 20, downtown (www.zara.com). There's the equally low priced **Mango**, with a branch at Goya, 83, (www.mango.es). And finally, take a look at the chain, **Cortefiel** with branch at Goya, 29 (www.cortefiel.es).

Beach and Sportswear

Shop 64 - Calle Hermosilla near corner of Velázquez next to Musgo. This is the only Madrid branch of the chic French Basque beachware chain based in Biarritz.

Fabric

Gastón y Daniela - Velázquez, 42, and several other branch stores. Gorgeous fabrics for reupholstering your chairs, sofas, your entire house!

Home Décor

Agua de Sevilla - Plaza del Marqués de Salamanca, 5, on the corner of Ortega & Gasset and Príncipe de Vergara. Open 10:00 – 21:00. Over ten thousand decorative items designed by this Sevilla Company are displayed in this elegant 19th century mansion.

Candles

Velas y decoración - At Claudio Coello, 69, for aromatic, designer candles and other home décor items.

Books

- **Casa del Libro** - Hermosilla, 21
- **Cristol** – Juan Bravo, 38

Travel Books/Accessories/Travel Agency

- **De Viajes** - on Serrano, under the VIPS. Lots and lots of travel and picture books. (deviaje.es)
- **Kuoni** - on Serrano, 7, is a top end travel agency (kuoni.es).
- **El Corte Inglés** department stores also have travel agencies, but they're always very busy so go to the branch on Serrano during the lunch hour.

Children's Clothes - *Absolutely exquisite!*

- **BuBú** - Castelló, 35.
- **Friki** - Velázquez, 35
- **Mellymello** - Claudio Coello, 97
- **Serri** - at the corner of Claudio Coello and Padilla.
- **Jacadi** - on the corner of Claudio Coello and Don Ramón de la Cruz.
- **Tartine et Chocolate** - Ayala, 24.
- **Petit Patapa** - on Hermosilla between C. Coello and Serrano
- **Nanos** - on corner of Hermosilla and C. Coello
- **Bóboli** - Hermosilla 20
- **Mi Pequeño Lucas** – Lagasca between Hermosilla & Goya
- **Normandie** – Lagasca at the corner of Goya

- **La Oca Loca** - Lagasca, 61
- **Mothercare** - Lagasca, 63
- **Spantapájaros** - Lagasca, 50
- **Metro Kids** - Lagasca, 56
- **Tuc Tuc** - Lagasca, 50
- **Bonpoint** - Lagasca, 71
- **Nenunco** - General Oraá, 61
- **Nancy Niños** - Diego de León, 29

Hairdresser to the Stars

Ruphert - Serrano between Juan Bravo and Maldonado.

Hairdresser for Mere Mortals

- **Alberto Cerdán (AC)** - Corner of Ramón de la Cruz and Lagasca. 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.
- **Alta Peluquería Daniel Romero** - Claudio Coello, near Conde de Aranda
- **Angela Navarro** - Jorge Juan, 12
- **Zacha** - Ayala 81, ask for Marisa Jiménez
- **Eva Viñas** – Lagasca, 58 (recommended by the Hotel Hesperia Hermosilla).
- **Llongueras** - any branch (llongueras.com). I use the one on corner of Lagasca and Ortega y Gasset.
- **Jacques Dessange** - Claudio Coello, 57
- **Frank Provost** - Claudio Coello, 33

Nails

- **Nail Bar** - Velázquez, 5, at corner of Conde de Arandana.
- **The Nail Concept** –Hermosilla, 92
- **Mi Calle de NY** - Ayala, 32

Day Spa

- **Lab Room** - Lagasca, 63 (recommended by Hotel Hesperia Hermosilla).
- **Caroli Heath Club** - Serrani, 42

INTERNATIONAL DESIGNER BOUTIQUES

They can be found either on **Ortega y Gasset**, between Serrano & Claudio Coello, on **Serrano**, from O y G on down to Alcalá, or on **Goya**, between C. Coello & Serrano. **Ortega y Gasset** is Madrid's Rodeo Drive, Madison Avenue, Bond Street, Via Tornabuoni, Via Condotti, and Faubourg Saint Honore all rolled up into one in a few short blocks. Here's the line up (but expect location changes).

ON ORTEGA Y GASSET

- **Escada**
- **Louis Vuitton**
- **Stuart Weitzman**
- **Cartier**
- **Bottega Venneta**
- **Burberry**
- **Lalique**
- **Jimmy Choo**
- **Tod's**
- **Kenzo**
- **Elena Benaroch (fur)**
- **Loro Piana**
- **Armani**
- **Versace**
- **Chanel**
- **Dolce Gabbana**
- **Hermés**
- **Hugo Boss**
- **Valentino**
- **Dior**
- **Tiffany**

ON SERRANO

- **Bally**
- **Pedro Muñoz**, elegant men's apparel
- **Loewe**, the Louis Vuitton of Spain.
- **Adolfo Domínguez women**
- **Armani**
- **Gucci**
- **Bulgari**
- **Cartier**
- **Manolo Blahnik**
- **Ann Klein**
- **Carolina Herrera**
- **Yves Saint Laurent**
- **Ermenegildo Zegna**
- **Max Mara**

ON CLAUDIO COELLO

- **Brioni**
- **Diane von Furstenberg**
- **Mui Mui**
- **Oscar de la Renta**

ON GOYA

- **Façonnable**, in Jardín de Serrano mall-men & women boutiques. Cheaper at Nordstrom!
- **Prada**
- **Yanes** offers Madrid's best jewelry.
- **Loewe**, the Louis Vuitton of Spain.
- **Amaya Arzuaga**, boutique for men and women plus bar. Lounge.
- **Antonio Pernas**, somber colors and design

El Rastro Sunday Morning Flea Market - I'm not a real fan of the watch-your-wallet and the bottoms of your pants Sunday morning flea market of El Rastro, with its hordes of people and provocative characters and hippie, sixties merchandise, including tie-dye shirts and the like, but there are some good, reputable antique stores in the area such as Galerías Piquer and Galerías Rivera on Ribera de Curtadores, 29, and, 15. If you decide to make El Rastro your Sunday morning activity, leave all valuables at your hotel and wear a money pouch. Go early to avoid the crush and don't expect any bargains, just kitsch for the most part. What I do enjoy is the post-Rastro scene in the neighborhood tapas bars, which will be bursting at their seams from 1:00 - 4:00 pm.

Outlet mall - It's in a Madrid suburb, **Las Rozas Village**, 30 minutes away, off the A6. There are 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. There are busses that leave every 15-20 minutes from the Intercambiador de Autobuses, lower level, at the Moncloa metro stop Madrid for tourists, but I wouldn't bother unless you're repeat visitors and really heavily into discount shopping. During the July-August sales, the prices in Madrid will be equally good. The same company that brings you Las Rozas Village also built the La Vallee Outlet outside of Paris and the Fidenza Village outside Milan. If you're headed north of Barcelona, there's also **La Roca Village** at exit 12, Cardedeu, on the A7, towards Girona.

Vat refund - You may recoup a portion of the 16% VAT on items you've purchased, provided you've spent a minimum of **€90,15 in one day**, at least that's the minimum of El Corte Inglés, but to collect this refund, you must have the store's paper work stamped at a VAT refund desk **before** passing through customs. Once the receipt has been stamped, it must be put back into the envelope provided by the store and mailed (no stamp required). The refund sometimes takes up to 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 Counter, found in the Duty Free zone after going through Passport Control.

Sports Clubs - You may be able to purchase a day pass for the new state-of-the-art **Club Metropolitan Abascal** at José Abascal, 46, or your hotel may have privileges at the **Reebok Sports Club**, the biggest health club in town, located in the upscale ABC shopping mall on Serrano, 61, near the American Embassy. Ask your hotel if they have an arrangement with one nearby.

Swimming Pools - There are public pools all around Madrid but using one depends on where you're staying and how far you're willing to travel. The **Time Out Madrid** guide has a list. If your hotel is near the Gran Via, go to the rooftop pool of **Hotel Emperador** at Gran Via 53. You can swim there for a fee. If you're staying in the northern business district, the **Hotel NH Eurobuilding** has a large outdoor pool plus a brand-new, state-of-the-art spa open to non-guests. If you stay at the Derby Villa Real, ask for pool privileges at sister **Derby Urban** (but miniscule rooftop pool, just for dipping).

SHOPPING SNACK BREAKS

Try the branch of the chic gourmet delicatessen **Mallorca**, on Serrano near the Puerta de Alcalá, or the one on Velázquez, 59, on the corner of Don Ramón de la Cruz, makes for interesting people watching. There's also a small branch on the top floor and in the basement of the very 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 Gerard Mulot of the 6th Arr. in Paris. Or look for a branch of the casual **Café y Té** in the basement of the ABC shopping mall or on the Plaza de la Independencia (Puerta de Alcalá)

For “coffee shop” fare

You'll find sandwiches, omelets, burgers and salads on the top floor of Serrano's branch of **El Corte Inglés** department store (handy restrooms in the back). Both counter and table seating, but it gets very crowded after 2:00.

For Valencian *horchata, turrón, fardones*

Alboraya at Alcalá, 125, is the place to come for authentic, artisan *horchata de chufa*, the almondy-tasting, refreshig summer drink of Valencia, served with the traditional *fartones*, that one dips into the drink. It also offers *granizados* (like a slush) in various fruit flavors and *leche merengada*.

For an ice cream break

Giangrossi – You'll find a branch of this ultra hip, high concept Argentinean artisanal ice cream chain at corner of Velázquez and Hermosilla. Try their gargantuan sampler (www.giangrossi.es).

For sit down, fashionable “ladies who lunch” break- *Dining after an exhausting round of high end shopping*

Brasserie de Lista - Located at the top end of Serrano at No. 110, on the corner of Diego de León, across from the American Embassy. A place to see and be seen as it attracts the social elite of this fashionable neighborhood. Outdoors dining. It offers a good value three-course lunch with bottle of wine/cava for two for €50. Or one can just have tapas at the bar. And it makes a handy spot for lunch after a visit to the wonderful Fundación Lázaro Galdiano just up the street.

Harina - An all white, airy space (“harina” =flour) in a terrific location on the Plaza de la Independencia (Puerta de Alcalá), this is 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 9am-11 pm. This also makes a handy, delicious

and affordable breakfast stop for those lodged at the Hospes, Wellington, Adler or AC Retiro Hotels (<http://harinamadrid.com>).

Teatríz - For something trendy with a Phillippe Starck postmodern design, head for Hermosilla, 15, and have a tapas sampler fixed-price lunch at this very chic designer spot, which occupies an old theater. Was renovated in the mid-nineties by Javier Mariscal and Phillippe Starck. Eat your tapas selection at one of the tall round tables in the front room, or dine formally in the round (Italian cuisine) in the old theater section itself. Very lively bar is on the stage. There's a small disco downstairs. They do gala openings and fashion shoots here. Make sure you visit the bathrooms!

Zen Central - Can be found on tiny Puigcerdá, a mews off Jorge Juan. This is where the fashion crowd lunches on the outdoor terrace. It is a creation of Roger Chen, whose luxury Asian restaurant, Asia Gallery, is housed in the Westin Palace Hotel. Nice fusion cuisine with a decently priced set lunch menu for €16. Closed Saturday lunch, Sunday & Monday.

Lavinia - This noted wine store is at Ortega & Gasset, 16. Has a small upstairs dining spot, the Espacio Gastronómico, where you can have lunch along with your favorite wine.

Quick Tapas / Sandwich / Cheap Lunch Break

Vinoteca Terrabacús - Lagasca, 74, near the corner of Don Ramón de la Cruz, is a fashionable café bar for a tapas/wine break with 60 wines available by the glass. Its specialties are cheeses and Iberian ham.

General O - Is on the corner of upper Serrano and General Oraá. Has a low cost fixed-price lunch of two courses plus dessert, bread and drink. This one also makes for a handy lunch stop after a visit to the adjacent Fundación Lázaro Galdiano museum.

Lateral - Velázquez, 57, at the corner of Don Ramón de la Cruz, is the Salamanca branch of a small chain of stylish tapas bars, which are popular with the area workers for their reasonably priced luncheon set menu.

Paninoteca D'E - Velázquez, 32, is a fashionable sandwich shop serving coca pizzas, salads, Paninis. Open Monday - Friday 9:00 - midnight and Saturday from noon – 2:00 and Sunday from 1:00 pm – 2:00 am.

MY GUIDE TO MADRID NIGHTLIFE

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/travel/madrid/ or softguides.com/Madrid_guide/ to get you started. Their entertainment sections are great resources for what's going on at night in Madrid. If you read Spanish, check out guiadelocio.com, it's a kind of "Pariscope" for Madrid or the ultra hip (and alternative) salirsalir.com.

Tickets - Opera and ballet tickets for performances at the Teatro Real (Royal Opera House) can now be purchased on line on the Teatro Real site, "Venta Internet" teatro-real.com.

Rock and folk concert and theater tickets may be purchased at **Madrid Rock** (rock concerts only) on the Gran Vía, 25, or at **FNAC** on Calle Preciados or online at fnac.es under "Venta de entradas". Theater tickets can be purchased at the ticket desk of any branch of **El Corte Inglés** or on line at elcorteingles.es/entradas/.

For half-price theater tickets go to **Taquilla Último Momento** at Plaza del Carmen, 1, near the Plaza Santa Ana, which offers tickets from 21 theaters open Tuesday - Saturday from 5:00 am – 10:00 pm. Sales are limited to **one** ticket per person.

CURRENT "IN" DANCE CLUBS - *For big spenders and beautiful people*

Gabana 1800 - Is located at Velázquez, 6, near Alcalá, in the chic Salamanca neighborhood. Very exclusive! The most luxurious and selective in the city. For the high-society/Hola crowd. Tough doorman. Wear your Manolos. Open from Wednesday - Saturday from midnight until 6:00 am. Entrance and drink will cost you €42.

Garamond - Claudio Coello, 10. Also located in the Salamanca neighborhood near Alcalá. Attracts a very dressy 40-50 yr. old crowd. Open daily from 10:00 am to 5:30 am.

El Confidencial - Eduardo Dato, 8, west of the Castellana Blvd. Hang out for "la jet" (private jet setters), journalists, some royalty.

Vanitas - Located at Velázquez, 128, near María de Molina, is another watering hole for the jet setting Salamanca crowd with a minimalist, cool décor that attracts a late 20s to 30 yr. old crowd. Open midnight to 5:30 am.

Fortuny - Calle Fortuny, 34, in the Chamberí embassy district (palacetefortuny.com). Three zones: the cocktail bar, the restaurant and the dance club. The Fortunato restaurant, housed in a beautiful 19th century palace, is open in the evening from 9:00 pm until midnight. In summer they open one of Madrid's prettiest and most fashionable outdoor terraces. It is a favorite of Gwyneth Paltrow.

Although the dance club opens at 11:00 pm, don't show up before midnight and don't expect the place to start to hop until 1:00 am. It closes at 6:00 am.

DANCE CLUBS/DISCOS - *For mere mortals*

These clubs don't reach their frenzy peak until the 2:00 to 3:00 hour and don't stop till dawn. They'll be completely deserted if you arrive before 01:00. After leaving the dance club, between 4:00 and 5:00, part of the early Sunday morning ritual, the requisite stop before heading home to bed, is to head straight to the beautiful, legendary old time **Chocolatería San Ginés**, which is located right up the alley, Pasadizo de San Ginés, from Joy Eslava, for churros, a type of cruller, y chocolate. This is a very thick, heavy, hot chocolate in which you dip your churros. Marble tables, velvet cushions in the cozy cellar. First you pay for your order then sit and give the waiter your ticket. Open daily from 20:00 to 07:00. Some people have been known to arrive at 01:00 and stay until they close!

For the curren hot spots of all kinds, see the six pages of choices (89 clubs) from the Time Out Madrid guide at www.timeout.com

Look for discount cards at your hotel for those listed below:

Joy Madrid - On Arenal, 11, off the Puerta del Sol, is an institution on the Madrid nightclub scene, frequented by the well known and the wannabes alike. Open daily from 11:30 pm - 6:00 am with entrance costing €12 Sunday -Wednesday and €15 Thursday - Saturday.

Ananda - Estación de Atocha. This new, outdoor macro disco of 2,000 square feet, with an Arabesque interior design by Tomás Alía, is THE spot to keep cool during Madrid's fiery hot summer months and is located in the old Atocha rail station (ananda.es). Alabaster bars. The enormous outdoor terrace opens from May - September daily, starting at 11:00 while the covered areas, chill out bars and dance floors are open from September - May on Thursday, Friday and Saturday from midnight until dawn. The €15 cover includes your first drink.

Reina Bruja - Calle Jacometrezo 6, a chic dance club designed by Madrid's "hot" hotel and club decorator, Tomás Alía. It is a corridor-like, subterranean space, divided by columns. An LED lighting system drenches the dance floor, a wavy wall and the toilets change colors in time with the music (www.reinabruja.com).

Pachá - On Barceló 11, near metro Tribunal, it's a mythic and emblematic dance club that opened its doors in 1980 during the Movida movement. It has three floors, several bars and a VIP zone. Open Wednesday - Thursday. from midnight to 5:30 am, 6:00 am Friday and Saturday. Entrance: €12.

Palacio de Gavira - Arenal, 9, is located just below the Puerta del Sol. Go up the sweeping marble staircase of this 19th century mansion to its five bars and ten very

ornate rooms: tromped l'oeil murals, grandiose gilded salons, stained glass, Andalusian tiles, velvet swags and heavily carved ceilings. There's a room for every musical taste. Holds International Parties on Thursdays for visiting foreign students, a younger teenage crowd. Open 11:30 pm – 6:00 am. Entrance: €15.

Kapital - Calle Atocha, 125. Its seven floors and 7,000 square meters include a cinema, shop, cafeteria, karaoke bar and multiple dance floors. It fills with tourists and expats. Open from midnight until 6:00 am. Thursday - Saturday.

Gold Field - Ventura Rodríguez, 7, near the Plaza de España, owned by actress Paz Vega. A current "pretty people" hot spot. Open from 1:00 am - 7:30 am.

69 Pétalos - At Alberto Alcocer, 32, is the dance club offshoot the popular cocktail lounge, **Déjate Besar** on Hermanos Bécquer. Open 11:30 pm – 6:00 am.

JAZZ CLUBS

Café Central - Plaza del Angel, 10, across from the Tryp Reina Victoria hotel. Named one of Europe's top ten jazz venues. Waylon Marsalis has played here. Open daily. Music begins at 10:00 pm. Weekends open until 3:30 am. Phone-91 369 41 43.

El Junco - On Plaza Santa Bárbara 10, this club is known as the city's best for late night jazz. Jam sessions on Sundays (blues) and on Tuesdays (jazz). Open from 11:00 pm - 6:00 am (www.eljunco.com).

Café Populart - Calle Huertas, 29, below Café Central, featuring Jazz, blues, salsa and reggae. Music starts at 11:00. Open 6:00 pm - 2:30 am and on Friday/Saturday until 3:30 am. No cover charge (www.populart.es).

Café Berlin - For old school jazz try this café at Calle Jacometrezo, 4, near Plaza Callao (www.cafeberlin.es).

ROOFTOP CHILL-OUT TERRACES

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

The Penthouse - Currently THE place to be seen, occupying the entire rooftop of the **ME Melía Reina Victoria Hotel** on Plaza de Santa Ana in Old Madrid. An enormous chill out bar with separate entrance to the right side of the hotel. 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.

El Cielo de Madrid - This is the rooftop chill out bar/restaurant at the **Hotel Urban** with only nine tables next to the diminutive pool.

El Ático de Las Letras - Is the top floor solarium of the **Hotel de las Letras** on the Gran Vía. Serves beer, wine, juices and champagne at fairly decent prices.

Gaudeamus - The bar on the roof terrace of the Open University building (Edificio Escuelas Pías) at Calle Tribulete 14, in the multicultural neighborhood of Lavapiés. For 20-30 somethings.

FASHIONABLE BARS FOR CRAFT COCKTAILS

Le Cabrera** - At Bárbara de Braganza, 2, off the Plaza de las Salesas (metro: Colón), this is new craft cocktail glamour spot-gastro bar sensation, is the 2010 the creation of Michelin-starred chef Sergi Arola and directed by his trusted and talented barman, Diego Cabrera. With an informal, contemporary decor created by Luis Gallusi, it's divided into two levels-in the downstairs lounge both classic and modern cocktails are served, and upstairs, patrons find a sleek, snazzy bar where they can enjoy creative tapas. All cocktails are priced at €10, except those prepared with champagne, which cost €14. Since the entrance is a bit tricky to find, look for it between the Elisa Braccio and Mercedes Quijo fashion boutiques. Le Cabrera was recently featured in the Madrid travelogue of Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations. It opens from 4:00 pm until 2:00 am. Closed Sundays.

El Dry Cosmopolitan - The Madrid outpost of Barcelona's Dry Martini opened by Javier de las Muelas in the Melía Gran Fénix Hotel at the Plaza Colón, this brand new bar, in the former quarters of the hotel's English bar, will be open from 12:30 pm until 2:30 am (3:30 am) on weekends. Along with drinks, an offering of traditional tapas will be served.

Belmondo - Recently opened under the viaduct along Calle Bailén in the La Latina district of Old Madrid at Calle Caños Viejos, 3, (very near the Abracadabra B&B) bartender Francesco Cavaggioni blends his own syrups and fruit purees to give his creations his own personal touch. The bar has an outdoor terrace with tables which will offer patrons a tranquil and cool place to have a drink during Madrid's sultry summer nights. It will open daily, starting at 7:00 pm and closing at 2:30 am (www.belmondococktails.com).

SHERRY SIPPING

Viva Madrid - On tiny Manuel Fernández y González, between Ventura de la Vega and Echegaray has taken the place of the gorgeously tiled but forever shut Los Gabrieles.

CHAMPAGNE SIPPING

Moët & Chandon Bubble Lounge - At Infantes, 11, in Chueca is the champagne lounge of the multispace **Isoleé**.

For those cold winter months

*The first three famed cocktail bars are on and behind the lower stretch of the Gran Vía. **Chicote** is an Art Deco bar of Hemingway fame that attracted celebs like Ava Gardner and Grace Kelly 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. Open on weekends until 3:30.*

- **Museo Chicote** - Gran Vía, 12
- **El Cock** - Calle de la Reina, 16
- **Del Diego** - Calle de la Reina, 12.
- **Belvedere Lounge** – Calle del Prado, 15, the subterranean chill out lounge of Olsen with the best selection of vodkas in Madrid

OPERA-BALLET-MODERN DANCE

Teatro Real - on the Plaza del Oriente, metro: Opera see schedule at teatro-real.com. 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! See their schedule at balletnational.mcu.es. 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 (www.endanza.mcu.es/).

Zarzuela - Spain's version of operetta is performed at the **Teatro de la Zarzuela** on Calle Jovellanos behind Parliament (www.teatrodelazarzuela.mcu.es/).

Teatros del Canal - 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. See this year's performance schedule at www.teatroscanal.com.

Last Minute Theater Yickets

La Taquilla Último Minuto - Works like its Broadway and West End equivalents and is located in the Plaza del Carmen, near the Puerto del Sol. Each buyer can purchase two tickets and pick them up at the box office two hours before show time. Discounts of up to 50%. 21 theaters now participate and it's anticipated that more venues will participate in the future.

CLASSICAL MUSIC / SYMPHONY

Auditorio de la Música - Príncipe de Vergara, 146, (metro: Cruz de Rayo). You can see the schedule for upcoming concerts of the *Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid* at www.auditorionacional.mcu.es/.

Spanish Radio and Television Symphony Orchestra, RTVE - Gives its concerts at the **Teatro Monumental** at Calle Atocha, 65 in Old Madrid. (www.rtve.es/rtve/orquesta-coro/)

Fundación March - Castelló, 77, (metro: Nuñez de Balboa) holds free chamber concerts on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm, Mondays/Saturdays/Sundays at noon, and also lectures, poetry readings important art exhibits (www.march.es). The Foundation now sports a hip café open for drinks, snacks, lunch, tea time and tapas, and it serves a bargain priced *menú del día* for around €10, a particular bargain in this pricey neighborhood. The café is open from 11:00 am until the museum's closing at 8:00 pm (on Saturdays until 4:00 pm).

ROCK

Major international soloists, groups perform in the **Las Ventas** bullring or the **Palacio de Deportes**. 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 www.guiadelocio.com (in Spanish) or www.sofdoc.es or www.esmadrid.com. Some ticket purchases can be made on-line before you leave, or you see who will be performing during your stay.

FLOOR SHOWS *and dancing for Senior Couples*

Florida Park - Retiro Park, has a nightly floorshow with dancing in summer to an orchestra that attracts mainly older couples, nostalgic for the 60s - 70s. Somewhat of a has-been, a holdover from the Franco era. Go late, but be aware it's on the nightclub bus-tour circuit.

La Scala - Meliá Castilla Hotel, has a Moulin Rouge type of floorshow with flamenco substituted for "can-can". Popular with tour groups, also on the nightclub bus-tour circuit, like Paris's Moulin Rouge.

GAY MADRID

The heart of the gay community is the Chueca district around Augusto Figueroa, Libertad, Hortaleza and the Plaza Chueca (www.chueca.com). Carnival, the week before Lent, is a particularly lively event in Chueca. Gay pride week is held at the end of June, complete with a large, colorful and loud gay pride parade through the city. The **Time Out Madrid** guide provides a section regarding gay & lesbian cafés, restaurants, bars and clubs.

FLAMENCO VENUES

Flamenco that's a bit different and (can be) better

Casa Patas - Located at Cañizares, 10, one block south of Calle Atocha in Old Madrid. More intimate, raw and usually very authentic. Caters to locals and performers themselves, besides tourists. Showcases the best rising flamenco talent in Spain today. For example, Casa Patas has featured Miguel Cañas, who is currently dancing with the terrific Sara Baras flamenco troupe. No tour groups accommodated, although you'll see plenty of tourists, particularly on weekends for the **first** evening performance at 9:00. Currently has shows Monday through Thursday at 8:30 and two shows Friday to Saturday at 9:00 and midnight. The midnight performance is much more intense, will impart the most *duende* or soul. As it will have fewer tourists and more locals, even performers in the audience to inspire the dancers. Our latest visit to the Friday 9:00 show was somewhat disappointing as we felt the first dancer was fairly uninspired. The second performance by the male dancer was much more soulful. Flamenco is a late, late night art form. Check casapatas.com for the current schedule.

You can have a full meal, actually quite decent, in the pleasantly noisy and very busy restaurant, open till midnight Monday – Thursday and on weekdays until 1 am. If you do wish to dine before the show, allow 1 ½ hrs. to enjoy your meal before showtime. Or just have drinks and tapas or raciones at the bar before the show. Cost of show: €34, including one drink. An expensive a la carte snack menu (Iberian bellota ham, chorizo, Manchego cheese platters, ham croquettes, potato omelets, olives) is served during the ninety-minute performance. You can email to reserve a table, but make sure to bring along a copy of your email confirmation, as the reservation system and seating is chaotic (also they do jam as many customers in this small, intimate space as humanly possible).

Closed Sundays.

Flamenco in the Tablaos (flamenco “night clubs” with floor shows) *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.*

Las Tablas - On the southeast corner of the Plaza de España and directly across from the Sabatini Gardens at the intersection of Ferraz and Cuesta de San Vicente is Madrid's newest flamenco venue (lastablas.com), which I have yet to try. It offers nightly shows at 10:30 featuring owners, Antonia Maya and Marisol Navarro and others. Holders of the Madrid Card receive a second drink on the house. Cost of show: €24.

Las Carboneras - At Plaza Conde de Miranda in Old Madrid is the second newest of the traditional tablaos shows, Monday to Thursday evening at 9:00 and 10:30 and Friday through Saturday at 9:00 and 11:00 (tablaolascarboneras.com). Closed on Sunday. Try to go late and skip the dinner.

Café de Chinitas - Torrija, 7, is a traditional and very tourist-oriented tablao for a nightclub like floorshow in a 17th century palace. Performances are at 10:30. Forget about having dinner. Go for show only! Entrance includes first drink. Closed Sundays. See chinitas.com for the schedule.

Corral de la Morería - Calle de la Morería, 17, is another heavily tourist-oriented but long established (1956) tablao in Old Madrid, in an atmospheric neighborhood, near the Royal Palace. Nightly shows at 10:00 and midnight. If Blanca del Rey is dancing, as she usually does on weekends, the show will be good. Again, go late, for the midnight show and forget about dinner. Cost of shows: €28 and €34. See the monthly performance schedule and reserve at coraldelamorera.com.

Flamenco Spectacles

In Theaters - Before you depart for Madrid, and if you read Spanish, check guiadelocio.com to see if any of the world flamenco artists will be performing in special shows at the Madrid theaters, such as the Teatro Albéniz, the Teatro Calderón, Teatro Real or Teatro de la Zarzuela: **Rocío Molina** (sensational!), **Sara Baras** (currently taking a “baby break”), **Eva Yerbabuena**, **Cristina Hoyos**, **Antonio Canales**, **Lola Greco**, **Juana Amaya**, **Belén Maya**, **Javier Barón**, **María Pagés**, **Rafael Amargo**, **Joaquín Cortés** (the final two are flamenco/modern dance fusion artists). Their flamenco troupes often perform these spectacles in Madrid (and around the globe) at the above theaters to a mostly all Spanish audience, and it's the **very best way** to see the most authentic flamenco by the most outstanding artists on the scene today.

Several of the above mentioned performers regularly tour the U.S. Go to flamenco-world.com and click on the bios of those artists, you'll get links to some of their web pages for info on their touring schedules. More info can be found on esflamenco.com. Or upon your arrival, check the In Madrid magazine in your hotel for flamenco stage shows during your stay. If you're in Madrid in February or March, the flamenco festival is held at the **Teatro Albéniz**. There are more flamenco stage performances in May – June during the Madrid en Danza festival and the Suma Flamenca festival held in May (sumaflamenca.com).

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** on 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.

PLAZA DE TOROS DE LAS VENTAS

Bullfights - The Madrid season runs from March to mid-October, with the highlight of the Feria de San Isidro running for nearly a month starting around May 8, and the season ending with the Feria de Otoño around October 12th. Bullfights are held during the summer every Sunday at 19:00 at the **Plaza de toros de las Ventas**, which holds 22,000 spectators. Tickets go on sale at **Las Ventas** bullring a few days prior. Purchase the **sombra** (shade) rather than the cheap, **sol** (sun), or **sol y sombra** (first half sun, second half shade) tickets for a comfortable afternoon. You can sit in the sun comfortably only in early May and mid October.



Be sure to rent a leather cushion, **almohadilla**, to sit on, (€1), as seats are very, very hard cement. Your seat will simply be a number marked on the concrete, and a very tight space at that! The best seats will be located in the Tendido Bajo section of sombra. The priciest seats are the *barrera*, *contrabarrera* and *delantera* perches (running up to €120), or the first four rows from the barricade before the Tendido Bajo begins. All seats in the Tendido Bajo sombra will be the same price. Avoid the nosebleed section, which is *andanada*. Tickets run from €2,20 to €1 25 or more, depending on location of seats, whether you choose *sol*, *sombra* or *sol y sombra* and whether you see a novice fight called a *novillada*, or full-fledged matadors performing in a *corrida* or the occasional bullfight on horseback, *corrida de rejones*. And if top names such as **El Juli**, **Enrique Ponce**, **El Fandi**, **Francisco Rivera Ordoñez**, **Cayetano**, **Javier Conde**, **José Tomás** or **Finito de Córdoba** appear on the cartel, be prepared to pay more. The May Feria de San Isidro, the Corrida de la Beneficencia in mid-June and the Feria del Otoño tickets will be the most difficult and the priciest to obtain.

Tickets are now available at www.taquillatoros.com, which is the on line sales operation of Las Ventas. Or www.tauroentrada.com, which adds a €14 charge per seat. They will mail the ticket to your hotel. Other on-line ticket sales are available at the following:

www.ticketstoros.com www.bullfightticketsmadrid.com www.ticktackticket.com

To see the Madrid bullfight schedule before you leave home, go to las-ventas.com, the official bullring website.

If you're willing to pay a scalpers fee with 25% or more mark up for those extremely expensive San Isidro tickets, go to Calle Victoria, 3, off the Puerta del Sol left hand side of street where you'll see a sign in Spanish, English, even Japanese for bullfight tickets. There's also an office selling marked up tickets on Goya, across from the Plaza de Colón. Look for the Tickets Toros sign.

If you can't or don't want to see a corrida, there is a small bullfighting museum around the corner way to the right of the entrance, inside the Patio de Caballos which is open daily 09:30 to 14:30. Free.

A guided **Tauro Tour** of Las Ventas bullring available Tuesday - Sunday from 10:00 – 2:00. Out of curiosity, we took this thirty minute guided tour (in English and Spanish) on Sunday morning at 10:30. We bought our €5 tickets at a window of the box office that was marked Tauro Tour, then headed to the far west, back entrance to the museum and “patio de caballos” to begin our tour. Real bullfighting aficionados would not find it particularly informative, but for the novice, it could be interesting to peer into the chapel (no photos allowed), to sit below the Royal Box (no visit to either the Royal Box or the infirmary), to hear the short explanation of the procedure of a bullfight, to see the picadors' horses and to walk the alleyway where the bullfighters wait. The tour ends, of course, at the new souvenir shop.

FÚTBOL

Real Madrid stadium - the Estadio Bernabéu, which holds 100,00 spectators, is located in the northern section of Castellana Blvd., at the corner of Concha Espina. See the schedule at realmadrid.com, soccer-spain.com. Visitors can now take a self-guided tour of the stadium daily (except December 25, January 1). Monday – Saturday. Hours are 10:30 - 3:00 and Sunday and holidays from 10:30 - 8:30. On game day's visitors may enter up to 5 hours before start of game. Purchase your tickets at box office, *taquilla*, number 10, next to gate 7, then enter through gate 20 to begin your tour. Price for adults is €15, €10 for children under 14.

Games take place on Sunday afternoons in the summer at 7:00, in the fall and beyond at 5:00 or 6:00. You can purchase tickets on line at: www.madrid-tickets.net/es/. Or go to www.santiagobernabeu.com for links for other online ticket agencies and also to view the game calendar.

Metro: Santiago Bernabéu